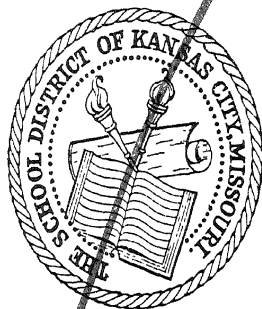


WRITING IN THE

Rocky Mountains

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WRITING *in the* ROCKY MOUNTAINS

WRITING IN THE *Rocky*
Mountains

By RAY B. WEST, Jr. WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY BY NELLIE CLIFF

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN STORIES

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LITERARY PERSPECTIVES

(in press)

CITIES OF THE WEST

(in press)

For WILBUR L. SCHRAMM

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WRITING *in the* ROCKY MOUNTAINS



The Youngest Region

It must be realized—and this is a fact which often escapes observers from the older, more settled sections of America—that the Rocky Mountain region was the last-born of our nation. It is young even in comparison with its neighbors to the South and East whose cultures were, in part at least, established by the nature of their settlers long before the great western migration of the nineteenth century began. The Rocky Mountain area was unknown before 1825. A few Spanish colonists had penetrated into Southern Colorado, and a Catholic priest had come within thirty miles of Great Salt Lake seeking a shortcut from Sante Fe to Monterrey, Mexico. Lewis and Clark had skirted the area in their examination of the newly-acquired Louisiana Territory, while Father DeSmet had set up Indian missions in the North. The fur trappers of the Hudson's Bay Com-

pany, The Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and the American Fur Company, knew the streams of Eastern Colorado and Wyoming, Montana and Northern Idaho, but it was not until 1824 that one of them, Jim Bridger, travelled as far south as Great Salt Lake, and he thought for a full year that he had reached the shores of the Pacific. There was no Spanish or Mexican culture, and no Indian culture comparable to that in the Southwest except for a few small bands of Navajos in Southern Colorado, Southern Utah, and north of the Grand Canyon on the Arizona Strip, sections that even today are sparsely settled. Brigham Young's band of Mormon pioneers, who reached the shores of Great Salt Lake in July, 1847, were the first permanent settlers in the entire area—almost exactly 100 years ago.

The historical background from this point on is well known: the goldrush in '49, which used the South Pass as a funnel to California; the discovery of gold in Colorado ten years later; the coming of the telegraph to displace the Pony Express; the transcontinental railroad following the Civil War; the discovery of copper at Butte and Bingham Canyon, the development of cattle and sheep grazing, and finally the homesteaders at the turn of the century. All of this has been, admittedly, material for the "regional" writer, and the wonder of American letters for many years was that such stories were not told seriously in prose or verse.

Some of them were told, of course—by writers who came into the area from outside. Washington Irving was impressed by the Western fur trade and the exploration of the West, and he wrote *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* and *Astoria*. Mark Twain and Bret Harte

recorded the humor, the color, and the melodrama of the Nevada gold camps. Living for a while in Colorado Springs, Helen Hunt Jackson was impressed by the romance of the Indians and the scenery. Walt Whitman visited briefly, as did Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, Richard Burton, and Oscar Wilde from England, and all wrote down their impressions of the people and of the country. Harry Leon Wilson, Owen Wister, and Zane Grey used the material of the Rocky Mountains in their novels, giving impetus to what has become as devastating an exploitation of the region's fictional resources as the incursions of Eastern finance have of its natural wealth. In addition there were a few semi-indigenous wits like Bill Nye and Eugene Field, newspaper men who exploited the broad frontier type of humor and made something of a national reputation for themselves out of it. But all of this material has been collected and edited by Levette J. Davidson and Prudence Bostwick of Denver, and is available in a single volume (*The Literature of the Rocky Mountain West*, Caxton, 1939). Aside from being an interesting collection of social data (including excerpts from pioneer journals and diaries as well as early reports of such geological investigations as that of Captain Howard Stansbury), the book represents an interesting and valuable introduction to a period preceding the appearance of indigenous writers.

Two problems have faced authors native to the Rocky Mountains who have wished to write about their region, and the difficulty of solving these problems is undoubtedly responsible for the delay in the production of notable works. First is the question of how to

approach the present scene, which is more than in any other area of America so closely related to the historical past, so closely related in fact that it is scarcely possible to write about it in isolation. The second question is how to deal with the past itself. Since there is little agreement on this point, even among professional historians, it is not likely that the writer (who is at best an amateur philosopher, historian, sociologist, or anthropologist) will fare better. The creation of works of art depends upon generally accepted attitudes toward society both past and present, and the quality of the work is often dependent as much upon the quality of those attitudes as it is upon the talent and the training of the creative artist.

Perhaps the greatest temptation is merely to reproduce the unique qualities of the local scene—the local “color”. The next temptation is to devise an epic frame suitable to the portrayal of such “heroic” events and characters as are represented in the early explorations, the battles of Indians against whites, the struggles for settlement, early industrial development, and what has become known as “empire building”. But the portrayal of local color produces little more than glorified reporting and is likely to become downright dishonest through the temptation to exaggerate and to falsify. The production of an epic demands the tragic sense, the recognition of man’s natural limitations in relation to his dream, a philosophical temper which is even less common to the West than to other regions of America, less common to America than to Europe,—a temper which has left its mark upon the 20th century more by its absence than by its presence.

Still, traditional moral systems do provide some kind of basis for tragedy, especially where they are linked to special cultural concepts. Both the success and failure of Western writing is illustrated in one of the latest of the historical novels to come from the Rocky Mountain area: *The Big Sky* by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. This novel is set in the central Rocky Mountain West in the period immediately preceding settlement. It follows the fortunes of its principle figure, Boone Caudill, ostensibly a contemporary of such mountain men as Bridger, Dave Jackson, and Jedediah Smith, through that phase of history which saw the increasing encroachment of western civilization upon the primitive wilderness of the Indian, the hunter, and the trapper. As a fictional report of this period it is not likely to be surpassed. As a portrayal of Boone Caudill, a tragic representative of those men who could not believe that the West was suitable for anything other than the nomadic life which they shared with the Indian, it is only slightly successful. Boone has the color, the physical prowess, and the self-confidence of the epic hero, but his spiritual qualities are too near to animal instinct to allow us to feel strongly about the final destruction of his career. The life of the Blackfoot Indians, in which Boone participates as an adopted member and as the husband of a chief's daughter, which might have supplied a cultural background for his feelings concerning the unspoiled wilderness, is investigated only superficially. One wonders if *The Big Sky* might not have been more successful as a factual biography instead of a novel, but this is a question which arises often in considering the historical novel of this or any other region, and one which I shall

be concerned with at greater length in Chapter Four.

It is undoubtedly indicative that the first sizeable group of genuine Rocky Mountain authors has sprung from the Mormon settlements of Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Arizona, and this is undoubtedly because the Mormons represented the single, early group of permanent settlers to come into the region already possessed of a single, unified belief, a cultural core against which the chaos of the frontier could be judged and set into some kind of order. Even then it was not easy for the Mormon writer to grasp the meaning of his environment. Speaking of Salt Lake City, Dale Morgan has written in the *Rocky Mountain Review*: "In the very presence of the fact, it is difficult to believe. You have to deal with the Kingdom of God—fashioned in the form of a Yankee town, set down at a Western cross-roads, and subjected to a fifty-year sand-blasting by the American frontier." Again it was the outsider who first grasped the psychological and dramatic possibilities of the Mormon story. As late as 1935, the most complete and sensible portrayal was made by an English writer, Susan Ertz in *The Proselyte*. But the floodgates were about to burst. George Snell's *Root, Hog and Die* appeared in 1936. Three years later came Vardis Fisher's Harper's Prize novel, *Children of God*, followed by Jean Woodman's *Glory Spent*, Paul Bailey's *For This My Glory*, Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*, Lorene Pearson's *The Harvest Waits*, Virginia Sorenson's *A Little Lower than the Angels*, and *On This Star*, and Richard Scowcroft's *Children of the Covenant*, all of these from native authors in addition to such novels as Hoffman Birney's *Ann Carmeny* and Elinor Pryor's *And Never*

Yield written by writers from outside the region. Bernard DeVoto had touched upon the subject as early as 1926 in his novel *The Chariot of Fire*, and he published his brief but excellent biographical study *Jonathan Dyer, Frontiersman*, in 1933. In 1943 Jonreed Lauritzen published *Arrows Into The Sun*, a novel dealing with the relations between Indians and Mormons in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona, while Wallace Stegner's valuable volume in the "American Folkways" series, *Mormon Country*, appeared the same year. Dale Morgan was also concerned with the Mormon story in his "Rivers of America" series book, *The Humboldt*, published in 1943 and in *Great Salt Lake* in 1947. Thus, this first phase of pioneer settlement, a fictional treatment of which had not been attempted ten years ago, has, at the present time, become almost a glut on the publisher's market. Bernard DeVoto's fears that the Mormon story, because of its extravagant and anomalous character, could never be told have been proved unfounded.

In contrast to the Mormon settlements, the mining camps of Colorado, Nevada, and Montana were picturesque and isolated centers of disorder, unified at first only by the personalities of such men as "Silver Dollar" Tabor, Sandy Bowers, and Marcus Daly and made up, for the most part, of transient wanderers whose dream of "striking it rich" was little more than a local variation of the false idealism of the Gilded Age. Likewise, the exploitation of the early cattle-ranges and "free land" came as a result of the same dream, as did the building of the continental railroad; but it was a point of view imposed upon the West by outside interests, and the

men who held it did not, for the most part, come as settlers, nor did they come with any understanding of why they had come beyond the desire to "make their pile" and return home. When they did strike pay-dirt, they often built fantastic and elaborate mansions in the hills or on the deserts and stocked them with the plunder of Europe. Like Denver's Tabor, they had themselves elected members of Congress and returned to the East in style.

That their whole, incredulous activity did have meaning, we are only now beginning to see and understand, though there were few among them with the desire to recognize this. As a result, little of their story has been written, and where it has been told it has been done by outsiders, by journalists who have understood the appeal the mere telling of such colorful tales would have. This accounts for such fictional biographies as David Karsner's *Silver Dollar* or Gene Fowler's *Timberline*. The native authors who have attempted to deal with the same material have had less technical ability and little more recognition of the total meaning behind the whole amazing phenomena of greedy digging in the earth for wealth. Dorothy Gardiner's *The Madonna of the Hills* and *Below Grass Roots* by Frank Waters are biographical novels, inept and sprawling, lacking the polish of the professional works, but they are, on the whole, more honest. Better are the novels of two Montana authors, *Singermann* and *Wide Open Town* by Myron Brinig and *The Glittering Hill* by Clyde F. Murphy, but they are better not because of any technical excellence or great talent, but because the subject has been approached from the point of view of an already

coherent ethnic group transplanted to the Rocky Mountain scene. Undoubtedly the two best fictional treatments of the mining theme are Vardis Fisher's *City of Illusion* and Edwin Corle's *Coarse Gold*, though Mr. Fisher's book is far from being his best work and Mr. Corle's novel is, perhaps, too much a philosophic treatise in the guise of fiction.

The story of the Rocky Mountain cattle industry represents, in many ways, a repetition of the history of mining. Perhaps the most promising of all Rocky Mountain literary material, this subject matter has been exploited by outside writers until it has become, as T. K. Whipple has pointed out, a form of regional myth—but, as Mr. Whipple neglects to say, it is a false one. The typical "Western" of Zane Grey, the moving pictures, and the pulp magazines has created an heroic figure of the American cowboy, which, it must be admitted has much in common with the mythological heroes of antiquity. This popular concept has, as a matter of fact, become so firmly planted in the consciousness of the American reader that an honest literary craftsman of the region has difficulty in approaching it. If, as Lionel Trilling has said, "The value of any myth cannot depend upon its demonstrability as fact, but only on the value of the attitudes it embodies, the further attitudes it engenders and the actions it motivates," then there is something somehow pathetic in the spectacle of Western "farm-hands" struggling to live up to this popular concept of them.

The success of the Western myth depends upon the measure of truth which exists in this portrayal of the lonely, self-reliant individual of the cow-country. The

popular story is possible because of the numerous actual conflicts between cattlemen and "nesters," between the cattle and sheep men, which provide a basis of truth and make it appear genuine. It is not only, however, that the myth is an oversimplification. All myth is that—a reduction of the truth to its lowest common denominator—but the popular myth is a simplification of all that was sentimental in character or fantastic in action. The real West was engaged in a gigantic struggle against nature. It rejected many of its inherited concepts, but retained enough to make the search for its own standards a very complicated one indeed, and evidence of both the struggle and the search are still apparent in legislation which demands Eastern aid in conservation and reclamation measures, on the one hand, but which literally thumbs its nose at Eastern morality from the divorce courts at Reno, on the other.

As a result there has been only one novel which has succeeded in dealing with the story both in its own terms and in terms of those elements of truth which the myth contains. Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident* is a genuine interpretation of one of the major conflicts of frontier life—the struggle for justice in a society which found itself without the usual means of obtaining it. This is also a familiar theme of the "popular" story, which can be said to have a theme only in the sense that we may see the cowboy hero, the Western out-law, and the beautiful "school-marm" as pale types in a simple, formulized allegory of absolute good and evil. Each of Mr. Clark's characters, on the other hand, is a human being with his own personal

reaction to the situation, a reaction conditioned somewhat by his own relationship to the environment, but displayed against a general, humanistic backdrop—the concept of justice as a mean between the impulsive vengeance of the irrational man of action and the sentimental pity of the moralist.

A third type of fiction, and one which has achieved a measure of genuine excellence, is the farm, or small-town, story. In a general way, much of this writing has been done in the tradition of the regionalists, particularly of the South and Midwest, which began shortly before World War I and continued into the 1930's. It is perhaps significant that most, though not all, of these stories from the Rocky Mountain area were pseudo-biographies, allowing their authors the opportunity of introspection and re-examination at a time when they felt, no doubt, incapable of the objectivity of the later historical fiction. The best examples of this type of writing are contained in the early novels of Vardis Fisher, particularly in such books as *Dark Bridwell* and *In Tragic Life*, set in the Antelope Hills country of Southern Idaho where Fisher grew up, and in such novels as *Second Hoeing* by Hope Williams Sykes of Colorado, *The Great Adam* by George Snell, Norman Macleod's *The Bitter Roots*, and Max Miller's *The Beginning of a Mortal*. It is significant, too, that most of the work in the short story falls into this classification, such stories as Jessie Treichler's "Homecoming," Ted Olson's "Cabin Fever," and Grace Stone Coates' "The Way of the Transgressor." There is a temptation to place Wallace Stegner with this group, remembering such stories as "The Bugle Song" and "Butcher Bird," but both are

excerpts from his most recent novel, and it would be a mistake to think of *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* as representing no more than is available in the short stories which have been taken from it. It has more in common with *Children of God* and *The Ox-Bow Incident* (though unlike them) than it does with *Dark Bridwell* and *Second Hoeing*. It is similar to Mr. Clark's second novel *The City of Trembling Leaves*, in that it presents the contemporary scene, partially in the light of its historical past, partially in relation to its Western setting.* While Mr. Fisher and Mr. Clark (in his first novel) measured the frontier against traditional religious and ethical standards, Mr. Stegner has chosen a perspective which creates mythical significance for the frontier itself.

But the chief facts which stand out in a survey of Rocky Mountain writing is the predominance of the novel and the comparatively small—though growing—amount of poetry. This can be partially accounted for by literary fashion, by the fact that there is little market for poetry and almost no financial remuneration. More important, however, are the facts that the writing of poetry demands, particularly in the short lyrics which are the dominant fashion, a preoccupation with matters of style and technique which the region has had neither time nor inclination to supply, and, further, that the Western story has been seen primarily as an epic, while the American epic form is not verse, but the novel.

* It might be noted, however, that Mr. Clark's principal problem is the relation of the artistic sensibility to its time and place. In this respect, Mr. Clark most nearly resembles Brewster Ghiselin, one of the three poets discussed in Chapter III.

There has been an inclination on the part of Westerners to consider the area beyond the Mississippi river the effete East, particularly New England and the East-central Seaboard, and this attitude may have been partly responsible for the kind of writing which has come out of the West. In poetry, it betrays itself in a lack of sympathy with the best verse being written elsewhere, which results in a continued attempt, on the part of minor versifiers, to hitch their uncertain talents to an outmoded tradition. The better poets are more sensitive to the cultural climate of their age, and some of them, like Brewster Chiselin, Thomas Hornsby Ferril, Ted Olson, Ellis Foote, and Alan Swallow, seem to have taken upon themselves a problem even more difficult than that of the novelists: an integration of themselves with the unique aspects of Rocky Mountain scenery. But when these poets do achieve publication their audience is small compared to the number of readers who purchase such books as *Children of God*, *The Ox-Bow Incident*, or *The Giant Joshua*.

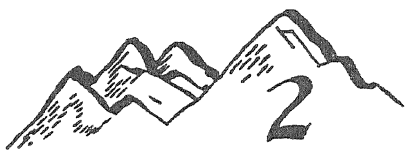
This is not, however, the most important reason why the novelists predominate either in numbers or in reputation. The American novel—at least to the present—has not been characterized by excellence of style or compactness of design (the examples of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James to the contrary), but it has been known for a native vigor, a robust and almost reckless kind of energy. It is true that most Western novels have been criticized even in comparison with other American novels, and justly, for their roughness of style, though praised just as highly for a kind of native vigor and freshness. Vardis Fisher was called by

Time magazine, "The Idaho Dreiser;" he has also been compared to Thomas Wolfe, as has Wallace Stegner, and there is a certain amount of truth in the comparisons. Maurine Whipple seems at times brilliant, at other times crude and overly-sentimental, as do Lauritzen and Davis. Even Bernard DeVoto, who cannot be said to lack a careful style, has been known more for hyperbolic idol-smashing than for his subtlety. I do not mean to be disparaging of these authors. The West is changing, and who is there to say the change is for the best? What its settlers lacked in education and refinement they made up in other virtues. Even Mr. DeVoto, who has been most critical of the West, cannot escape it, and one has only to glance at his collected writings to realize how much he is a part of it.

But I would have Mr. DeVoto read for another purpose: for a realization of the comparative isolation in which these Rocky Mountain authors have worked. Even the early colonizers of our eastern sea-board knew nothing like it. Though they had the wilderness—the physical isolation—they had, for the most part, a cultural inheritance which most Western pioneers lacked. Even today the combined population of the Rocky Mountain states, covering roughly one-fifth of the nation's area, does not equal that of Chicago or New York City. The scholars and the writers have, for the most part, left the region and gone elsewhere—to Harvard or New York City—and while it is true that they have taken the West with them, they have left their cultural environment little better than they found it. Perhaps that tendency is today diminishing. As Denver and Salt Lake City become more like San Francisco and Kansas City,

and these latter cities more and more resemble Chicago and New York, the spiritual isolation will disappear, but with it much of the color and vigor that has given life to this first crop of indigenous writing.

At the same time, it should be stressed that none of these writers has thought of himself as a "regionalist" in the usual sense. They have written as they had to write, aware of the world about them—the natural surroundings of mountain and forest and desert, the struggle to make a living from a more than usually hostile environment. They have been aware too of the part they have played in the American dream of westward expansion, of the various ideals of religious and group security, of "striking it rich" in the gold and silver mines or in cattle and sheep. All this in addition to their own private dreams they have been aware of and have written about, and the result is a strangely coherent, though as yet incomplete, picture of a developing cultural tradition.



Four Rocky Mountain Novels

The four most important works of fiction to appear from the Rocky Mountains have all been published since 1939, the year Vardis Fisher won the Harper Prize with his novel, *Children of God*. This was followed by Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*, another Mormon novel, and by Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident*, in 1940. Three years later Wallace Stegner completed his first full-length novel, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, and with these four books, fiction in the Rocky Mountains had come of age, displaying not only a maturity of treatment, but a diversity of style and subject-matter.

Mr. Fisher and Miss Whipple were born and raised in small Mormon communities of Idaho and Utah. Neither Mr. Clark nor Mr. Stegner was born in the region, but Wallace Stegner was still very young when he was brought into northern Montana with his family, and he received most of his education in the schools of

Salt Lake City and the University of Utah; likewise, Mr. Clark was a young boy when his father was appointed president of the University of Nevada, and he thus spent his early years in Reno. The extent of the influence of the region upon these authors can be judged by the extent to which they have made use of their regional background in solving their fictional problems, or, to put it another way, the extent that the region has influenced their choice of subject matter and the treatment of it.

It can never be known, I suppose, exactly how much artistic talent is wasted in a frontier community, because sensibility is nothing without expression, and expression comes only with a measure of technical training and leisure. The early West provided little of either. In regard to such influences, Bernard DeVoto has written of his home-town, Ogden, Utah: "In the town as it was in my early childhood there was little interest in books, no general literary taste, only such love of reading as was inherited in isolated families or might develop by itself." There was, however—and I think Mr. DeVoto has slighted this aspect of the West—a kind of cultural center represented by ethnic groups in certain isolated communities, and the Mormon culture (regardless of what might be thought of it as theology) did represent an institutionalized cultural core which provided a preconceived attitude, a scale against which personal experience could be evaluated with some kind of satisfaction. On the whole, however, it is true that most of the West lacked any means of achieving a degree of personal integration with the wilderness, and the early years (even more than is true of most pioneer settle-

ments) were years of chaos and experiment. It is, therefore, not surprising to discover that the earliest writing—aside from private journals and diaries or the reports of explorers from the East and from Europe—came, like the novels of Myron Brinig of Montana, from the ethnic settlements with a Western version of the farm story already popular in the Midwest and South.

Vardis Fisher's early novels were in this general tradition, with their emphasis upon the primitive cruelty of life in the barren Antelope Hills country of Southern Idaho. *Toilers of the Hills*, his first novel, is a story of settlement, a detailed account of the difficulties encountered by a family sent out to reclaim the native, sage-covered soil of the Snake River valley. In its general outline, it follows the method of the farm-family saga of other regions, differing from them primarily in the uncontrolled violence of the emotion expressed against the barbarities and animal-like cruelties of the frontier settlement. The same general tone continues in the second novel, *Dark Bridwell*, but with a measure of control achieved by a closer focus upon a central character. Both of these early works anticipate the tetralogy (the almost strictly autobiographical series of novels with which Mr. Fisher gained his first nationwide recognition), particularly the first volume which employs an identical setting. But with the three following volumes the reader is carried, for the first time, away from the small Mormon community and into the outside world, first to Salt Lake City, then to Chicago and New York. The theme of the tetralogy Wallace Stegner has called ". . . the record of a brilliant and tortured mind weaving itself a dark web of near-insanity because of the

conflict between impulse and inherited false idealism." The series represents, however, an inverted form of idealism, utilizing the contrasts between a brutal and dehumanizing environment and the extreme sensitivity of the central figure.

Children of God, appearing in 1939, represents at first glance, a complete break with the series of eight novels which preceded it. It is essentially, the story of the Mormon migration west from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, though including in its scheme the early days of the church in New York, Ohio, and Missouri, and continuing to the time of the manifesto prohibiting polygamy several years following the death of Brigham Young. In its general tone and selection of events it is an historical epic, and it succeeds admirably in capturing the whole heroic atmosphere of the Mormon trek, its idealism, fanaticism, devotion, humor, and tragedy. Its action is concerned, for the most part, with the historical conflicts between the Mormons and their enemies, the occasional disagreements among the Mormons themselves, as well as the problems of polygamy, political recognition, and social adjustment.

The novel is composed of three parts, the first centering around the Mormon "prophet," Joseph Smith, and covering the period preceding the westward migration; the second, and most important, with Brigham Young in the leading role, relating the journey and the early days of Utah settlement; the third allowing the emergence of a minor historical figure, who has served as a unifying character from the beginning of the book but who finally breaks with the main body of authority at the time of the voluntary repeal of polygamy. The his-

torical outline was as familiar to Vardis Fisher as the natural surroundings of the Antelope Hills. In his mind—as in the minds of all Mormons, particularly in the small outlying communities—the stories of Joseph Smith, of Brigham Young, of the original company who came west in '47, of the handcart expeditions, the conflicts with the federal government over territorial authority and polygamy had taken on the nature of a myth. Though the ideals which had brought his own parents into the Idaho hills were no longer valid, the courage with which the homesteader met his eventual defeat was admirable. Likewise, the empire of Brigham Young's dream was doomed, according to Mr. Fisher, but the vigor with which that dream was held blasted the wilderness and set up the earliest and most successful settlement in the West. It is the tone of high seriousness and admiration which permeates *Children of God*, and which (despite its opening somewhat "clinical" examination of the "divinity" of Joseph Smith) accounts for its unity, its effectiveness, and probably its popularity. It creates an heroic stature for Brigham Young, and it treats the major events with an epic seriousness, many of the minor characters and events in a vein of epic comedy. It might be said that if the early novels of Mr. Fisher are an examination of his environment, an examination and an evaluation, *Children of God* represents a celebration of it. For all that, it is, however, no less an evaluation.

Other Mormon novels have been less pretentious, and the second most popular of them, Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*, represents, in many respects, a contrast to *Children of God*. Its tone is similar, differing

however in degree, so that it might be called, for want of a better word, lyrical. While Mr. Fisher was concerned with the whole sweep of the Mormon westward movement, Miss Whipple concentrated upon a single settlement: what has become known as the Dixie Colony in Southern Utah. Located 300 miles south of Salt Lake City in a valley which within the space of a few miles drops from an altitude of 6000 feet above sea level to only a few hundred feet, the settlements surrounding the community of St. George have a climate resembling that of Southern California, and it was here that Brigham Young, in his attempt to make his Utah empire self-sufficient, established his winter home and set his colonizers to growing cotton, tobacco, and developing the culture of semi-tropical fruits. It was, in the early days, probably the most colorful of all Mormon settlements.

The story itself is focused upon a young woman convert to Mormonism, who very early becomes the only slightly unwilling bride of an older church dignitary—his third wife. From this point on the action drops into the background, threading its way slowly—not always faultlessly—through a maze of descriptive passages, descriptions of characters, or frontier customs, of clothing, and of a series of communal events such as the construction of an irrigation system, trouble with the Indians, the building of a tabernacle and later the first Mormon temple in the territory, as well as the periodic visits of Brigham Young and other Mormon officials. Actually, what Miss Whipple achieves finally is the most complete report of a small pioneer community on record. It is a variation of the local color story, but with all the advantages and none of the “falseness” of the guide book type

produced by the professional journalist who knows only the externals. Miss Whipple's treatment suggests again the value of the Mormon myth, which attempts to encompass all the problems arising from the establishment of a unified religious-social group. It is rich in specialized incident, a result partly from the author's portrayal of the attempts of the settlers to achieve a measure of psychological protection against outside influences. It is a folk crystallization, highly susceptible to exterior representation, and we recognize its meaning even in the title itself. The giant cactus of the Southern Utah desert—the Joshua tree—like the characters in the novel, draws a meager sustenance from the arid soil, but its pronged arms are outstretched toward heaven. It is this double focus (the earth and the dream) which gives depth to the historical conception, and it serves Miss Whipple as it did Vardis Fisher in *Children of God*.

But such a concept is not new, and it is not confined to the portrayal of Mormon society. The Mormon story represents an isolated and unique case in that it represents a special religious group in contrast to the chaotic cruelty of the natural wilderness. The same humanizing struggle was in progress elsewhere in the region, and Walter Van Tilburg Clark has applied it to the particular problems of the cattle range in his novel *The Ox-Bow Incident*. The struggle here is not for religious freedom, not for a particular brand of spiritual salvation represented in the Mormon creed, but for an all-embracing, general concept of simple justice. One suspects that Mr. Clark began, not with the specific historical fact, as did the Mormon authors, but that he saw the moral fact in all its general implications and then set

about to clothe it in an objective sequence of events. In so doing, however, he drew upon all of the physical and psychological resources of western history; above all, he utilized the heterogeneity of character which the various success-seeking enterprises of the West supplied. In its rigid simplicity of plot-structure, his novel is almost classical in design. Its style (despite the fact that it is a narrative told in the first person) is almost coldly dispassionate. Its theme, the miscarriage of a mob attempt to achieve justice, is heightened and emotionalized by the steady progression of events preceding and following the lynching of three supposed cattle thieves. Its richness of texture is gained by the diversity and interplay of character types representing the full range of possibility inherent in the subject matter. The narrator is a kind of chorus, a participator in the events, but certainly not the central figure. If there is a "hero" it is Davies, the store owner and unofficial moralist of Bridger's Wells, who is the spokesman for the idea of legal procedure because he believes that it is only through "due process of law" that injustice can be avoided. It is upon this that Mr. Clark has put almost the full burden of remorse at the end of the story where it is determined definitely that the mob has lynched three innocent men.

"Now do you see," he said triumphantly, like all he wanted to do was make himself out the worst he could. "I knew those men were innocent. I knew it as surely as I do now. And I knew Tetley could be stopped. I knew in that moment you were all ready to be turned. And I was glad I didn't have a gun."

Davies is not an heroic figure, except in a new sense—

he is a pacifist. Even with his concept of justice, he was glad he could not use force to save the lives of three innocent men. Farnley comes nearer to the traditional type. He is the friend of the man reported killed by the cattle rustlers, and he is quickly moved to action. But even he is displaced as leader of the mob by Tetley, the confederate officer who had, for reasons unknown (though it is assumed, with an unemotional lack of interest in such matters typical of the West, that he was a man persecuted by a sense of sin or of guilt) transplanted his Southern plantation into the Nevada desert. He participates only to initiate a sensitive and tortured son into the active life. Tetley has the outward shell of the "hero" and that is all. Besides him there are Winder, the stage driver; Osgood, the Baptist preacher; Sparks, the Negro; Mapes, the deputy sheriff; Ma Grier, masculine and spoiling for any kind of action; and Gil, the friend of the narrator; but the fact is that the spotlight is not put upon any of these characters except Davies for any length of time. The whole action might be said to represent a multiple tragedy only, with the degree and kind of emotion varying according to the worth and kind of the various characters, but with the burden of remorse falling upon the only person with the ability to verbalize his conflict: the moralist, Davies.

But to say this is to say no more than that it is not a tragedy at all in the traditional sense. It comes nearest to what has been called the "tragedy of character," though falling short because of the obviously intentional incompleteness of individual character portrayal and the use which is made of the characters to represent levels of symbolic reference. It does, however, move the reader

to an accumulated sense of horror by the steady and relentless movement of the act to its completion, to pity for the majority of the characters, who are seen to be motivated by a reasonable ethical cause, but who are defeated by an insufficiency of intellect or overweening of passion. The novel supplies, in addition, a pleasure aroused by the ironical juxtaposition of character against character, and, as in the case of Miss Whipple and Mr. Fisher, of idealism and reality, until it becomes finally a highly original variation of a clearly recognizable pattern. It is a version of the most common of all western themes, and one suspects that much of the sense of originality comes, exactly, from the fact that Mr. Clark felt the necessity to avoid the commonplaces of the popular Western story of the pulps and the cheap novels.

Walter Van Tilburg Clark, then, as well as Vardis Fisher and Maurine Whipple, has made use of material which only the time and place could make available to them. The Mormon myth and the struggle for justice and security in a frontier community represents a form of cultural inheritance which is as important to the novelist as the study of techniques and the formalized learning which have come, with any degree of efficiency for the Western writer, but recently. The creation of the historical myth has grown out of the same need that motivates man to any examination of the past, racial, national, or in the broader framework of humanistic achievement, and the ultimate value of such a concept lies in its utilization as a standard for a contemporary ordering of nature; that is, for the stabilization of human attitudes as represented in group culture or for the re-

flection and examination of that culture by the creative artist. Thus, Wallace Stegner in his latest novel, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, while concerned with more nearly contemporary events, still views his characters and his action through the perspective of historical events, in terms of what might be called the most general mythological portrayal of all—the myth of the frontier.

Mr. Stegner's novel still retains the epic frame-work, but its theme is based upon the recognition that the West is no longer a scene for heroic action of the type celebrated by Vardis Fisher, a problem at once more complex and more sophisticated than that of the earlier novels. In addition, the author makes use not of a single locale, not of a unique and special group, but of the entire Rocky Mountain area from Saskatchewan, Canada, to Reno and Salt Lake City. The central figure, Bo Mason, begins life in the Middle West. Endowed naturally with every talent that usually makes for the successful man of action, curiosity, daring, and physical strength, he is driven westward by an overwhelming desire to "strike it rich."

He had a notion where home would turn out to be . . . —over the next range, on the Big Rock Candy Mountain, that place of impossible loveliness that had pulled the whole nation westward, the place where the fat land sweated up wealth and the heavens dropped lemonade.

There is little recognition of moral problems in Bo Mason's dream, because that battle had been won before he was born. Bo was confronted only in his personal relations by the necessity which represented the special

problem of the characters of *The Ox-Bow Incident*—the psychological necessity to replace chaos with order—and as a result there is in him no real struggle for moral integration, an inability to distinguish between the values of one activity over another. He died a defeated, bewildered, and bankrupt speculator, by his own hands in the lobby of a cheap Salt Lake City hotel.

“He was a man who never knew himself, who was never satisfied, who was born disliking the present and believing in the future. . . . He wore out his wife and broke her heart, he destroyed one son and turned the other against him. At the end he degenerated into a broken old man, sponging a bare living and sustaining himself on a last gilded, impossible dream; and when he could no longer bear the indignities which the world heaped upon him, and when the dream broke like a bubble, he sought some way, out of an obscure and passionate compulsion to exonerate himself, to lay the blame onto another.”

This is an astute—even perhaps brilliant—examination of the character of Bo Mason, suggesting as it does the impossibility of the “gilded” dream, the false idealism for which Bo stood. They are the words of the author through the consciousness of Bo Mason’s one remaining link with the world—his son, Bruce. Beginning as a foil and contrast to his father, Bruce has begun by the time of his father’s death to recognize his own dreams and to realize that it was compounded, in part, of his parents’ errors. The relationship of Bruce to his father is the relationship of Mr. Clark’s characters to their environment. Other authors might have called it the moralizing influence of the characters’ contact with evil,

but it is significant that few of the Rocky Mountain authors have seen evil as anything more than a combination of environmental circumstances. Bruce, thinking back over his father's life, says:

Perhaps that was what it meant, all of it. It was good to have been along and to have shared it. There were things he had learned that could not be taken away from him. Perhaps it took several generations to make a man, perhaps it took several combinations and recreations of his mother's gentleness and resilience, his father's enormous energy and appetite for the new, a subtle blending of masculine and feminine, selfish and selfless, stubborn and yielding, before a proper man could be fashioned.

But the end is the same—to fashion a proper man, a proper society. The evil in Bo Mason consisted in his failure to achieve what he, with his great talents, felt that he was capable of achieving, his inability to compromise with the society which was emerging from the frontier, his confusion in defeat. Brigham Young and the settlers of the Dixie Mission might have said it otherwise. Their dream consisted in a heaven and a hell as well as the earth. They would have said Bo was possessed of the devil. That is the difference, but there are similarities too. For Bruce and for the settlers of the Bridger's Wells, the fulfillment of the dream lay in the future, not in the present. The tragedy of *The Ox-Bow Incident* is that Mr. Clark's characters, like Bo Mason (though his dream is a false one), attempted to achieve a kind of perfection through their own individual and all-too-human judgment. Call it what you will—Heaven, the Big Rock Candy Mountain, the idea of

justice—it all amounts to the same thing: the struggle to fashion order out of the chaos of the individual mind and the natural universe, and it is significant that the novelists of the West recognized this as their proper fictional theme.

Contemporary with the actual events, nothing seemed more meaningless to the outside observer than the activity of the frontier. The Mormon question, the emigration to the gold fields of California and Colorado, the problems of land-grabbing and cattle-rustling were great topics in the eastern newspapers of the day. The problem has been to evaluate the motives of such multifarious activity, and we know now that artistic objectivication is only the final stage in that labor. It has, however, in the literary history of all time, followed a recognizable pattern, beginning generally with an epic utilization of the myth and progressing, with the aid of a clearer understanding and improved technical facility, to a conscious application of the myth to contemporary events. The process is, of course, not quite so clearly defined, and it is confused in the history of Rocky Mountain writing by the fact that the region does not present a true development from primitive understanding and concept to a high degree of cultural awareness. It was an area settled by a people whose primitivism was only relative, induced by the types of people attracted to the frontier and by the inability of the settlers to transport highly complex cultural machinery into the barren wilderness. The degree to which this general development is true, however, may be judged by the extent to which this pattern is representative of the four authors under consideration.

There is, of course, little that is new in this interpretation. Its originality consists in the kind of facts with which the author deals—his subject matter—in the specific, not the universals. Bo Mason and Brigham Young interest us in the particularities of what they saw and in the relationship between the fact and the dream. Bo's tragedy moves us not only in the degree that we recognize and share his dream, but also in the degree to which we recognize the fallacy and implications of it. The chief value of the Rocky Mountain author is that he satisfies a need which is not unique, for the clarification of the relationship of the myth with the facts. The remarkable thing about this body of writing is not, as had been long supposed, the fact that it was late in arriving, but that what we have is as competent and aware of its obligation as the present four novels indicate it to be.



Three Rocky Mountain Poets

The problem of the poet in the Rocky Mountains, as I have said, is made more than usually difficult by the contemporary trends away from a kind of verse for which his native materials are best suited: narrative verse which would utilize the many dramatic episodes of frontier history or nature poetry which would allow him to experiment with the exotic and picturesque qualities of the natural scene. He is caught between the Charybdis of popular poetry, on the one hand, and the Scylla of sophisticated modern verse, on the other. He can, in other words, give up his attempts to express himself in terms of his own specific environment (which is centered upon historical and scenic concepts) and accept the broader metaphysical concerns of the best poets among his contemporaries, or he can appeal to the popular taste through the falsely sentimental attitudes

of the public toward Western scenery and the frontier myth.

Neither of these alternatives is attractive to the serious Rocky Mountain writer. He is faced with the tremendous facts of a natural environment which compels his attention, but is left without the means of obtaining sufficient apprenticeship to integrate those facts into an aesthetic form. There is reason to believe that most of the writing talent in the West has turned to prose, not, as is commonly believed, because there is a wider reading public (though this may have something to do with it), but because of the very difficulty of acquiring the proper technical ability to express the emotion inherent in his psychological relationship to his background. As always, however, there are those who have persevered, and who have begun to beat a path for other poets either to follow or to reject, which represents at least the beginning of a local tradition, the final unit binding the poet to that vast circuit of general culture which lies beyond his own geographic area.

A Rocky Mountain poet who has taken the way of the crusader is Thomas Hornsby Ferril of Denver. Early impressed by the scenery of mountain and plain, by the legends of Indians, pioneers, trappers, and miners, Mr. Ferril has, both in his poetry and in a few prose essays, been extremely conscious of the problem of giving meaning to (or finding meaning in) the emotions aroused and the questions raised by the phenomena of nature. His first book of verse *High Passage* was published by the Yale University Press in 1926 as the twenty-second volume in their "Younger Poets" series. Yale University also published his second volume *West-*

ering in 1934, while a third book *Trial By Time* was issued in 1944 by Harper and Brothers.

We have rather a clear record concerning Mr. Ferril's intentions through several essays in which he has been at pains to outline his program as a Western poet, the first to concern us here being an article entitled "Writing in the Rockies" which appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1937. In this essay, Mr. Ferril, following the lead of Oscar Wilde, who visited Colorado during his American lecture tour, pointed out that the danger in writing of the Rocky Mountain scene consisted in the psychological necessity of most poets for some form of "God finding" or "God identification" as a result of the stupendous and sublime effects of the natural setting. The poet must learn, Mr. Ferril says, to overcome this tendency if he is to produce poetry. It is not enough to say, "Only God can make a mountain," but the scene must be conquered by the poet as man; it must be made to serve human and rational, not non-human and irrational, ends. It must go beyond the mere tourist-gazing of visitors from outside the region.

Without quarreling with Mr. Ferril's statement of the problem, we can point out the value of this attitude in such lines as the following from *Westering*:

But if I go before these mountains go,
I'm unbewildered by the time of mountains,
I, who have followed life up from the sea
Into a black incision in this planet,
Can bring an end to stone infinitives.
I have held rivers to my eyes like lenses,
And rearranged the mountains at my pleasure,
As one might change the apples in a bowl,
And I have walked the dim unearthly prairie
From which these peaks have not yet blown away.

But even such mastery of his materials as is indicated in these lines has come only since publication of Mr. Ferril's second volume. Some of the earlier attempts were almost purely descriptive, as:

This is the river's skeleton,
Bone white, desert dry,
The rocks are skulls with moss for hair
That moves when the wind is high;
This is the outworn channel,
The yellow shadows slant
Through sandy crypts of oven rocks
Where pallid lizards pant.

But it is unfair to Mr. Ferril to select his earliest poems as examples. More important would be an examination of the subject matter with which he has dealt. Almost every selection in *High Passage* makes some use of the Western theme. There is, however, much juxtaposition of frontier myth with classical and Old Testament mythology which has the air of experimentation and which the poet foreswore in his *Saturday Review* essay. There is, in almost every poem, a sense of straining on the part of the author to combine imagery and theme, to give meaning to the materials with which he is working. There is a noticeable dependency upon simple rhythmic forms and simple rhyme with a surprising number of the poems being written in a series of quatrains. There is, on the other hand, no experimentation with unusual forms, so that the feeling is that the regularity represents an effort on the part of the poet to compensate for an inability to fuse other elements.

Between 1926 and 1934, however, there is a definite indication of growth. In *Westering* there is little indication of fumbling for an integrated point of view. Mr.

Ferril seems by this time to have decided also against the four-line stanza form, and to have adopted a kind of controlled free verse, not imitative, but reminiscent of Whitman, Sandburg, and the early Frost, which gives a more unified tone to the whole volume. The attitude toward the mountain scenery is firmer, as indicated in the excerpt from "Time of Mountains," quoted above, and there is a definite feeling for the Western myth.

We no longer find a mere reliance upon the simple juxtaposition of the present and the past. Mr. Ferril is now concerned with the problem of relating the one to the other, as in the poem "Fort Vasquez," where two travelers are passing the old fort in a new automobile. They are talking about the development of modern science, and one of them suddenly notices the ruined remains of the old buildings:

The driver usually says:

There's old Fort Vasquez;
Somebody ought to put a marker there!
And some one says:

It ought to be restored!

And I'm about to say:

*How beautiful,
With what you know of earth and air and flesh
To let these old walls go the way they're going!
Let's bid them godspeed and be on our way!*

Or I'm about to say:

*How might we best
Unwind a hundred years? How might we now
Reorganize these elements again
With certitude that those who pass this way
Experience alone the works of Vasquez,
And nothing that our different hands have added?*

There is no doubt in the poet's mind about how such

landmarks can best be preserved. They are a part of history, and history is represented in us. We do not ". . . unwind a hundred years." History is still with us, but it is altered by us; it has become a part of us. This kind of mythological concern with history invariably leads to the problem of time. The Rocky Mountain poet is made doubly conscious because his history represents a telescoping of time. Sod shanties that did not appear until after Lincoln's time are now preserved as relics. Winchester rifles are antiques, and the buffalo, which furnished food for the laborers of the Union Pacific, is a symbol of the passage of time, of a past era. The poet can say, "I'm . . . half as old as the city is." He is impressed by what had happened in so short a time:

The prairie twinkles up the Rocky Mountains.
Feel how the city sweeps against the mountains;
Some of those higher lights, I think, are stars.
Feel how the houses crowd and crack uphill.
The headlands buckle with too many houses.
They're trying to find a place where they can stand
Until the red lights turn to green again.

But there are disadvantages to so much change, for:

. . . there's hardly a child in all the sleeping children
From here to where we think the stars begin
Who sleeps in a room where a child, his father, slumbered.

Mr. Ferril's preoccupation with time is suggested in the title to his latest volume *Trial By Time*, but the metaphysical aspects of the problem tend to lead him away from the Western scene. In this last volume there are occasional improvements in technical ability, a tightening of imagery, less dependence upon simple statement and easy associations of statement, and more

variety in the verse forms in the poems concerned with the regional themes. When a broader view is attempted, however, as in "Let Your Mind Wander Over America" or in "The Gavel Falls," where the poet attempts to use American history divorced from the kind of emotion which is evident in his mountain poems, too much of the content is little more than a simple listing of familiar names and places, almost as though in the attempt to widen the scenic focus and to enlarge the scope of thematic concern, the poet has been called upon for a reorientation. The level of excellence on a strictly technical plane is higher than in the two previous volumes, and there are better individual passages, but there is less unity. Science and the meaning of scientific discovery have, partially at least, replaced the interest in nature as such. Science, like the mountains, is something that man must hold under control.

But despite this gesture away from the particular regional setting (or, perhaps, because of it), the general effect of this volume is one of diffuseness. While Mr. Ferril, in his introduction, deplores what he calls the "death-bed repentance" of American poets since the beginning of the war, it is clear enough to anyone who reads *Trial By Time* closely that the author has succumbed to the same malady. His best poems are confined to the familiar Rocky Mountain setting; his poorest are what he himself calls "road-map poetry, but no sense of where the road started a long time ago or where it was heading." I feel that Mr. Ferril knows a great deal about the West where it began (certainly) and where it is headed (perhaps), but what he has to say about Harper's Ferry and the freeing of the slaves

does not seem nearly as important to me—or for America—as the following lines concerning a man who has just picked up a buffalo skull on the Cheyenne plains:

I entered the trench they cut through Signal Butte,
And I pulled a buffalo bone from the eight foot layer,
And I watched the jasper shards and arrowheads
Bounce in the jiggling screen through which fell dust
Of antelope and pieces of the world
Too small to have a meaning to the sifters.
One of them said, when I held the bone in my hand:
 "This may turn out to be the oldest bison
In North America," and I could have added:
 "How strange, for this is one of the youngest hands
That ever squeezed a rubber bulb to show
How helium particles shoot through water vapor."
And the dry wind out of Wyoming might have answered:
 "Today is going to be long long ago."

Another poet who has confined himself primarily to the subject matter of the Rocky Mountain area is Ted Olson. Like Mr. Ferril, Mr. Olson appeared first in the "Younger Poets" series, with his volume, *A Stranger and Afraid*, published by Yale University in 1928. Since then he has published *Hawk's Way*, in 1941. The general point of view of the first volume is indicated by the lines from Housman which appear on the title page:

And how am I to face the odds
Of man's bedevilment and God's?
I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.

Mr. Olson has approached his material from a direction opposite to that of Mr. Ferril, and it is perhaps significant that the fourth line of the Housman stanza

supplied the title for a novel by the American "naturalist," James T. Farrell, for Mr. Olson is nearer the tradition of most Rocky Mountain novelists, seeing the impersonal cruelty and terror of nature, instead of recognizing, with Thomas Hornsby Ferril, that there is a grandeur and sublimity in the natural setting which the poet may serve to bring into some kind of benevolent and humanistic focus. For Mr. Olson the gods are gone and man is left alone surrounded by an alien and cruel nature. Having risen from the slime of one creation, he has been thrown back into the slime of another. "Ours is a race too lean of wit to swell Mythology with one red, lusty hell!" Man has, he says in one poem, only his laughter to preserve him.

When the eternal frost draws tight its net
To strangle this half-conscious clod we tread,
We shall go laughing back into the dread
Dark ordure whence we came.

But there is something like a literary pose in the tone of some of this early verse, something immature in the combination of lusty dissent and "poetizing." We are not surprised to discover elsewhere in the volume an attempt to reveal some more positive view of mankind's relation to the earth, as in the following octave from a sonnet entitled "Farmers."

Farmers grow kindred to the soil they till,
One with the swart hills where their cornlands reach.
Granite is in their gaze, contained and still,
And the slow pulse of rivers in their speech,
They have their silences like those of loam
In winter, obdurate and indifferent.
They tread the land Antaeus-like, at home,
Fed from the turf, indomitable, content.

But this is still a literary exercise. Mr. Olson's farmer is from Iowa, or anywhere except Wyoming, in the first place. The suggested mysticism, in the second, is neither as true as the statement of it would make it seem nor original enough to carry the full burden of the poet's feeling. A positive attitude toward nature in general is suggested, however, and it is presented less didactically in a great many other poems. Sometimes it is merely a sentimental celebration of the mountain seasons, as:

Now has another year of roses
Scattered its bright, ephemeral flame
Through river-bottom and arroyo
In the high country whence I came.

Or:

A heart's a brittle thing at best,
And easily reft—as you may learn
Should yours be drawn to east or west,
Somewhere your feet may not return.

But it was not until the end of his second volume that Mr. Olson seems to have combined value and sensitivity into any kind of artful whole. His resolution is still a mystical one, but more original and inclusive than in his early poems, concerned not alone with the feeling of the farmer for his land, but with the feeling of all people in all places for the land which they know best and with which they have identified themselves. In an examination of his Norwegian ancestry and the fact that his father left Norway to settle in Wyoming, Mr. Olson finds a conflict between man's identification with place and his constant restlessness, which is more dramatic and more satisfying than the simple statement of mystic union. The concept came, presumably, as a result of a trip to Norway, and it is expressed in two poems of the

second volume, "Salute to Norway" and "Notes Toward a Biography." The first is concerned with the knowledge that, even in a second generation, the feeling for place is not obliterated, and both poems take full advantage of the double-focus of the Old World and the New:

Surely I know that it is not alone
Your blood in me that suddenly knows its own.
It is Wyoming that I find
In Norway now because of old I found
So much of Norway in Wyoming, where
You planted all you thought to leave behind.

The second suggests an attempt to synthesize much of what has appeared in the earlier poems. It is, I think, the best of Mr. Olson's poems, though containing a fault which was particularly noticeable in the early short lyrics, that is, a tendency to end with a surprising and shocking statement not always growing out of what has gone before:

These waters, gray like iron (if iron could take
Snow to itself); bending as iron bends,
Stiffly reluctant; cold as iron is,
And as infertile—these are the same waters
My father knew long since, and loved, and left,
And did not see again. My father surely
Walked these same hills, and looked to sea, and saw
The world beyond it. Africa he saw,
And India, and Japan, and would not rest
Till he had known them. But these hills of Norway
He knew no more. He plowed himself at last
Into a new land—not so unlike his own—
Making Wyoming richer with his bones.
The long, inscrutable curve of space returns
Upon itself. And so I come at last,
Sixty years after, to these hills, these waters,
Not quite perceiving why. Is it some hunger

For home that lay recessive in the blood
I had from him? Some stubborn tide that sets
Back to familiar shores? I do not know.
Rather, I think, I come from some obscure
Desire to chart my origins, some hope
These hills may tell me what and why I am.

My father held the wheels of tall Norse ships
In tropic hurricanes; drove locomotives
Hard on the trail the emigrant wagons made;
Broke prairie sod, built ditches, proved to scoffers
That grain would thrive where sage and greasewood
throve,

Read history and poetry, and died
At fifty-four. He did not plague himself
With questions or attempt to torture words
To devious attenuated uses,
Or with their flimsy leverage to dislodge
A brute immovable age. Words were a tool,
Like axe, or plow, or sickle, hard and shining
And unmysterious. He used them well
When there was need for words.

The blood runs thin
And acid in these later generations.
The brain is whetted to a finicking
Acuteness, splintering when it cannot cut.
The lusty curiosity that sent
Our fathers forth to learn a world turns inward
Upon itself, to starve and sicken now
On questions.

I am glad sometimes my father
Did not live to know his son too well.

These taciturn iron waters take the snow
No more indifferently than they take
My questions to themselves. The hills lie shrunken
Under the weight of winter; and one ship
Goes seaward. Does some tall Norwegian boy
Stand on the deck and look to Africa?
And will he make some new barbarian land
The richer for his bones—the poorer, maybe,

For one questioner?

For so the cycle
Recur: one generation hewing boldly
Its signature on life: another seeking
For meanings, doomed by some ironic chance
Never to be content with any meaning.

So let one cycle end. I have no sons.

Mr. Olson's poet is the decadent and effete child of the man of action. Art (so far as this concept is not a pose for him) represents an escape for the weakling. This is the opposite of Mr. Ferril's sounder conclusions, which see him as the myth-maker, the preserver of history. It is through Mr. Ferril's poetry that Nature and the action of the pioneer are brought into focus, their multiple relationships made meaningful for our time.

A third poet, Brewster Ghiselin, does not belong so unreservedly to the Rocky Mountain region as either Mr. Ferril or Mr. Olson. Coming originally from California, he remains more sensitive to the traditional images of seascape remembered from his boyhood, less compelled to solve the particular problems that seem so urgent to the indigenous Rocky Mountain poets. The unique aspects of the mountain scene are less a general human riddle and more a specific fact of his own exile, so that the use of its imagery is often a contrast to something that seems richer and more meaningful in the imagery of the sea, as in "Inland Spring":

Here I shall see the mortal snow recede,
And over the gray the gradual greens renewed,
And peacock cherries spreading fans of bloom
On cloud, a counterpoint of flowers and foam.

But not the marvels of that carven coast,
The flowing shores, the sea-reach in the west,
Moon ruled, sun troubled, earth and heaven fed,
Beauty on which the depth of life will feed.

But Mr. Ghiselin is quick to grasp the symbols which have meaning for him, and he has the ability to invest them with a richness which is, on the whole, more complex and interesting than the work of the other two poets. In the first four lines of "Gull in the Great Basin Desert," Mr. Ghiselin has expressed the essential emotions of his mountain exile:

Sea gull in level lunge and long
By this white salt far from the foam,
Hungrier than hawk, who come,
Like me, to feed on the desert's fruit.

The gull on the barren waters of Salt Lake is an apt symbol for one conscious of removal from the sea. There are no fish in the heavily salted water of the lake, and the gull is forced, like the hawk, to forage for his food away from the water—to become a scavenger. Such foraging is likened to the poet's need to feed on that to which he is unaccustomed. The metaphorical significance is given fuller development in the next stanza.

Unrinsed beside the blue barren lake
You glide, unpuzzled by defect,
Corruption black upon the beak
That gorged the carrion flesh and fruit.

The unwashed gull with "corruption black upon the beak" expresses the feeling of the exile, but the whole scene is charged by the words "unpuzzled by defect," which explain both the nature of that feeling and point up the awareness of the man in contrast to the bird.

The defect of the man exists not only on the single level of fact: that he had allowed himself to leave his proper environment (the word "unrinsed" puts the whole image on the level of religious ritual), but the more potent fact of his awareness raises the theme into a realm transcending the particulars of local imagery. The poem represents, at once, the specific facts of the incident as well as the general facts of the emotion with a compactness of form and a richness of language, which, finally, is the measure of Mr. Ghiselin's success and of his superiority as poet.

It is, of course, impossible to say that a poet would have been better or worse under this condition or that, but it seems reasonable to think that Mr. Ghiselin's poetry is of a richer texture, though less voluminous, for the double view of sea and mountain. As he says in his long poem "Meditation in Exile": "The mountains unmake me." It is an indication of his integrity that they do. He is not satisfied to solve everything by memory, to use a figure from the same poem, but he must search for the meaning in his new conditions and in the new landscape.

Piled

Oppression strews the horizons, weighs on the
world,
Leans upward from the mass and myriad interest
Of the stricken hills, from the dazzle of windings
draining
The chine and height of the Oquirrhs, from the
slough of the Wasatch.
And yet this land lives: here as there,
The snake lies in the shadow of the flower,
sleeping;
The upswEEP over the height hurls the hawk.

But I don't wish to make the fact of exile too important in the total of Mr. Ghiselin's production. It is but one facet, though an important one, in the many-sided concerns which his total work indicates, a means whereby he has expressed his own emotional tension and yet gone beyond to appeal to the sense of the exile inherent in his reader.

Mr. Ghiselin, though he has published widely in magazines, has just recently been given publication in book form. His first volume is titled *Against the Circle*, and its meaning is reinforced by a quotation from William Blake on the title page, the lines addressed to God:

If you have form'd a circle to go into
Go into it yourself and see how you would do.

The volume is divided into five sections, the first composed of poems which the author considers to be of critical value for our time, many of them late poems dealing with the war; the second made up for the most part of sea poems, including some of the earliest of Mr. Ghiselin's work; the third representing the personal world of one who stands on the line (of the circle), composed of the poems with the exile theme and poems in which the mountain and sea imagery are either in balance or in contrast; the fourth called "epistemological" poems; and the fifth composed of personal love poetry. Had Mr. Ghiselin published earlier it seems clear that there might have been at least two earlier volumes, the first representing those works in which the sea imagery predominates, a second containing the poems of exile, and a final volume containing the less personal reflections upon war and upon general

philosophic themes. In this case, there would have been at least a directional resemblance between his development and the expanding interests of Mr. Ferril. As it is, *Against the Circle* gives more the impression of being a collected work than the usual first volume of a promising poet. As with Mr. Ferril, there is a sense of achievement on several levels, the first two (the sea poems and the exile poems) culminating in the excellent "New World" with its integration of the two themes in a poem which unifies the two early, predominating types of imagery:

This is the land our fathers came to find;
They found the old world only, they found the
 known
Measures of the moods of their own minds:
The blue mountains' dying, the plain's surmise,
The bones and bountiful nakedness and thought
Of barbarous rock, and the green peace of earth;
They found the hostile forests of the heart.
This is the earth that should have had our love,
The loam that deepens by the deepening streams,
The mould that feeds the forest and the flower,
The musk and metal of a stony dust:
Three centuries the foothold of our life,
Never the roothold. How could we love a path?
A place of passage or unwilling rest.
In our blood's need we came from the cold cliffs
Up from the low shores and the smell of spray,
Westward from the duneland and the pines.
We crossed the silent rivers in the plains
And climbed the abrupt west, and fed our need
With dust and sun and the humming juniper,
And came to a broken coast, the barrier sea:
No earth, a pathless glimmering of waves.
No way behind us but the travelled lands,
No way before us but the lemmings' grave.

This is the opening section of a fairly long poem, but sufficient to illustrate not only the use of the combined imagery of seacoast and mountains, but the use of the whole Western myth. It is, in addition, woven into a tougher fabric than either Mr. Olson or Mr. Ferril would have been capable of, perhaps tougher than either of them would have desired; but it indicates also that Mr. Ghiselin has felt more at ease with the discipline of contemporary trends than they have. Mr. Ferril has not presented the Western scene with the intensity of the following lines, in which Mr. Ghiselin asks, "Where is the new world?" and replies:

Only in time,
In moments of the individual mind:
Flashes and fragments: seen in the waste wall
And rock-ridge, heart-defining height and
hawkfall
Isolations, and on joshua slopes
Blackened with burnt blocks of rock whose
drummings answer
Bourdon and hornvoice, grooves and gold of
hills,
Music to name our needs: too briefly seen
Between the many voices of the past.

In the final, title-poem of Mr. Ferril's last volume, on the other hand, one feels that he is striving for compactness of imagery, similar to Mr. Ghiselin's, but one recognizes also a failure to fuse the images with the thought, so that the poem is saved from almost complete obscurity only by the explicit statement. A few lines (not the least successful) will perhaps be sufficient to illustrate:

Out of the tide-slime
Credulous we come,
Singing our latest God stabbed and perfumed,
Springing the eye of the enemy from the socket,
Building a ladder to a broken bird,
Meadow and mine to the pocket,
Dream to the word.

Beginning with the loose statement of the first two lines, Mr. Ferril comes nearest to the form for which he is obviously striving in the Hopkinsian third and fourth. The fifth and sixth lines, however, are little more than a repetition of the third, with the exception that the fifth gains something from its position following the third—its contrast to it. But the final is an extremely slack generalization of the meaning inherent in the “latest God stabbed and perfumed” of the third line and of the idea expressed in the images of the ladder to the broken bird or of the act of transferring “meadow and mine” from the hills to the pocket in the fourth and fifth. The intrusion of Western images is unfortunate here, too, because they are almost isolated in a poem which has so little reference to the Western scene specifically. The poem falls apart primarily because there is no integration of imagery, because it lacks what most of the poet’s verse uses so skillfully: a unified scene or narrative as a vehicle for the expression of a general thought or emotion. The concept of evolutionary man which is used in this poem fails because it is obscured by inappropriate imagery and weakened by prose statement when it should be fused by a related imagery and charged by the exact metaphor.

I have brought up this point in regard to Mr. Ferril because he has raised it himself. In his introduction to

Trial By Time he has indicated clearly that he has a quarrel with most modern poetry. As Alan Swallow, one of his most fervent well-wishers, has written in a recent review, this is unfortunate because it results only in making his friends into his enemies, his enemies into friends. It raises questions of only peripheral interest to the major body of his work. That Mr. Ferril has indicated a dislike for T. S. Eliot need not necessarily represent a limitation unless his work indicates, as it does with so many who have adopted a similar attitude, that he is not satisfied to continue doing what he can do well, but is desirous also of beating other poets at their own game. Undoubtedly the above poem is just such an attempt. Mr. Ghiselin, on the other hand, has succeeded in reconciling the materials of the region (of two regions as it happens in this particular case) to the uses of the present tradition. Without raising the question of why the majority of poets of the present have adopted what might be called loosely the metaphysical style, or the question of whether this particular style is suited to the Western theme, it seems clear that the conventions of the moment need not rule out the kind of verse written by any one of these authors. There is no reason why Mr. Ferril, for instance, should not have written such a poem as "Trial by Time"—if he could have brought it off successfully, but it seems clear from an examination of his work that his perception is primarily for the tone and color of a scene or for a relationship of man and nature which is nearer to Wordsworth's conception than it is to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where most modern poetry has its roots. To say it differently, he is nearer to Robert Frost

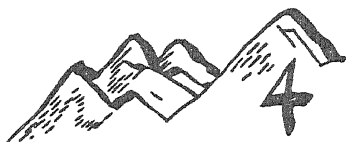
or to Carl Sandburg than he is to Yeats and Eliot, and I mean no disrespect to anyone in saying so. To continue the analogue for what general truth there is in it, Mr. Olson's position is reminiscent of the Victorian variations of nineteenth century romanticism, while Mr. Ghiselin would appear to be nearer the main-stream, with its sources in the Elizabethans and the metaphysical school, through Blake and the French symbolists to Eliot. Neither Mr. Olson nor Mr. Ferril, for example, would have written the following, the signature poem of Mr. Ghiselin's book:

With tiger pace and swinging head,
With gentle tread and turning grace
The walking stripes, the walking stripes
Of the mind stride in their too-little place.

But what if it escaped and walked
In the green city?
There is no city, said the tiger mind.

There is the cage, the absolute bar,
Things as they are, that bind my rage
And wrap my claws, said the turning jaws
And prisoner eyes in their too-little place.

But what if it burst its world and ran
To the snake-green jungle?
There is no jungle, sighed the striped mind.



Mormon Material in Serious Fiction

One highly successful writer remarked recently that "historical fiction" was the easiest form to write, because one simply thumbed through historical documents until he discovered some interesting character. He looked up all available facts concerning the character's environment, period, and personality, and then proceeded to put them on paper.

"The story writes itself," he said.

What the author undoubtedly meant was that it is easier to write a historical novel, where the record books present one with a subject, and, within certain limits, a sequence of events in that subject's life, than it is to invent both character and action. But understood in this light, the term "historical fiction" is a paradox, history being a record of past events which have oc-

curred in real life, while fiction might be called a record of events feigned or imagined.

In practice, historical fiction becomes a combination of both. Vardis Fisher, in *Children of God*, has chosen for his principal characters people who actually lived during a certain interesting period in American history. He has attempted to re-create the actual events of the period with all its trappings of picturesque speech, habit, and social customs.

It is obvious, however, that this could not be carried to its logical extreme. That is to say, it is impossible, even with the aid of the most complete journals and records, to re-create these characters—or even the speech and customs—exactly as they existed in real life. Anyone who has ever attempted to write fiction realizes to how great an extent the actors in a story must remain “imagined” characters.

It is here that the trouble begins. Probably the first, and most practical, problem arises, because all important historical characters attract a number of scholarly devotees who know more about that person's former habits and environment than the novelist can ever hope to know without becoming a research scholar himself.

Vardis Fisher was aware of this problem, and he met it with a very practical device, though not an uncommon one, since it had already been adopted by Susan Ertz in *The Proselyte*, as well as by George Snell in his *Root, Hog and Die*. It is a favorite device among writers of historical novels. A secondary thread of action is devised about some minor character in history, or in the author's imagination—a Tim McBride (to choose an example from *Children of God*)—and it is through

this character that much of the important information is given. This represents the "fictional" history—or the bulk of it—and it serves several purposes. First, as I have suggested, it allows for more freedom in the portrayal of important human emotions, such as love, hate, envy. Second, it fills in the gaps left in the known historical records, allowing us intimate glimpses into the everyday details that make up life at a particular period, details which are seldom caught and preserved by formal historians. Third, and most important, it allows the author to arrange his materials into an artistic pattern.

There is nothing new in a writer's choosing a figure in real life as a model for his "fictitious" characters. What is unusual, as every writer knows, is for the character to bear any marked resemblance to its model by the time the work is completed. Exigencies of the writing craft and of the work in progress generally result in making the character either more or less—frequently more—complex than he appeared in real life.

This danger (if it is a danger) is, admittedly, less great for the historical novelist who has been fortunate enough to choose a subject from history, at once many-sided as a character and prominent in a series of actual events of the type which go to make up the "action" of fiction. On the other hand, it is just such a character that creates the difficulties mentioned earlier.

Vardis Fisher must have become aware of the problem when he was accused by a reviewer, on the one hand, of portraying Joseph Smith as though he *was* a prophet of God, and when the Mormon Church objected, on the other, that he had turned their "prophet" into a mountebank.

As literary criticism, both objections are beside the point. As a criticism of history (and that is another matter), they are probably legitimate objections, though it is difficult, even here, to know just how scrupulously the historian is able to reproduce the historical figure or the epoch. I imagine that for most Americans the George Washington of Parson Weems's fable is more real than the hard-drinking, swearing, modern version of our first president.

Is it possible to reply that everyone has a right to his own interpretation of history? Is Joseph Smith, for instance, as much the property of Vardis Fisher as he is of the most devout Latter-day Saint? If all we demand is a character portrait or an "interesting" story, I suppose the answer might be yes. If the value of the novel as an art form lies deeper than this, then it is not Joseph Smith that we are interested in at all. Rather, it is the control of human elements represented in the story of the Mormon seer that must, in the long run, be the concern of both critic and artist.

If this is true, then the modern writer of historical fiction is dodging his responsibility. In giving us the colorful picture of the Mormon prophet, Vardis Fisher would appear to be merely throwing out a bait with which to attract us to the more serious matters represented in, or through, the minor characters. But this is not so. Mr. Fisher has attempted to ride both horses at the same time. Realizing the difficulty (we might say the impossibility) of centering the story upon Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, he gives us the character of Tim McBride, who provides a kind of unity by continuing throughout the book as a symbol of the thing

which, I suspect, Vardis Fisher was most intent upon giving us—the spirit of the Mormon people in their various conflicts with outsiders and among themselves. The failure lies in the fact that it is not until the final section of the book that McBride is allowed to dominate the action. I might even have said “is able” to dominate the action. He had his own love affairs, his own personal conflicts and rebellion, but as a symbol of the movement as a whole, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young gain a dominance that Tim, even with his final rebellion against the manifesto prohibiting polygamy—against the authority which he has previously accepted—is unable to overcome.

A second difficulty confronting the writer of “Mormon novels” is one which a critic, in speaking of Maurine Whipple’s book *The Giant Joshua*, called “undigested research.” As an example, he pointed out that the author had taken ten pages of small print to describe the various articles of clothing worn by the principal character. This is, I believe, a legitimate criticism, and other examples could be selected from the volume to sustain it. The entire book is, however, the best proof. The stream of action, while excellently conceived, moves very slowly. The characters seem often buried in a flood of irrelevant detail. Its final interest—perhaps a laudable one, but not necessarily literary—is that it becomes a kind of museum where we are invited to browse with the author among the now curious objects of an interesting, but rapidly receding historical period. At one point, the author even steps inside the frame of her own picture to comment, not upon the characters or the acts they have performed, but upon the natural objects—

the contents of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers' Museum in St. George, Utah.

The point is this: It is not the material I am criticizing, but the use of it in serious literature. The application of the material must be judged according to literary standards. A literary interest, I have stated, is one that is primarily concerned with human acts and motives. An interest in an object used by the creative artist, for itself alone, is a sentimental interest.

That is not to say that the author should not have such an interest, but only that the material which he uses should lead to a greater understanding of the characters themselves, and thus to a greater perception of the problems with which they are confronted, a more genuine response to their acts. As a matter of fact, it should be used as an objective vehicle to carry the action. The building of the church, the temple, the irrigation projects, and the story of the "three Nephites" are all examples of an excellent and proper use of these materials by Miss Whipple. The conflict of the Mormons and the federal government over the issue of polygamy is an historical event which practically all the Mormon novelists have used; the colorful language, vigorous and expressive, has also been used as a means of gaining added verisimilitude. But such materials should be used to heighten the dramatic effect. They must not clog the action or conceal the motivation.

The 20th Century is insistent upon the value of objective detail, since our science teaches us that all knowledge is empirical, and since modern social studies stress the importance of environment upon character. Thus we see a tendency among novelists to emphasize

the social forces at work in the society they are depicting, to relegate the characters—even the central character or “hero,” in many cases—to a secondary position. As a matter of fact, the so-called “social novel” attempts to eliminate the central figure entirely, to give what the author hopes represents a cross section of humanity. This may, in part, explain the over-conscious use of historical data by Miss Whipple. It certainly explains the form used by George Snell in his novel *Root, Hog and Die*, as well as the use of the three generations depicted in Lorene Pearson’s *The Harvest Waits*.

Mr. Snell attempts to show how social forces operating throughout the whole of the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century influenced the development of the Mormon commonwealth. Miss Pearson was more concerned with local environmental conditions. Both are excellent novels when judged by contemporary standards, but both suffer, it seems to me, by giving too much value to forces outside the lives of the characters in their books.

The question remains whether or not it is possible to satisfy the historian, the social scientist, and the student of folklore, as well as the literary critic, in writing “historical fiction.” I make a distinction here between the “historian” and the person interested in regional and national “lore,” because the historian seems to me to be primarily interested in scientific fact—that which actually existed or happened—while the folklorist retains his interest even when the fact has faded into the misty realm of the supernatural. He is, indeed, often more interested in myth than in fact.

R. P. Blackmur offers an answer to our question

when he states that tradition, or a traditional system, can become a satisfactory objective symbol for the expression of human emotions only when that tradition is decadent. He points to the freedom in the Greeks' use of historical and religious materials, to the use of the New England "tradition" by Emily Dickinson, as well as the application of the "Catholic tradition" by John Donne. In other words, when the tradition has become something more than an exacting guide for living, the creative artist is first free to use those materials as—to use T. S. Eliot's expression—the objective correlative for the expression of human emotions. Plato had no place for Homer in his Republic, because the perfect state has need only for poets who will sing songs of praise. In the same way, Brigham Young disliked criticism from lay members of the church, and he tolerated only the singers of hymns. At the same time, he himself criticized the national government and allowed his poets to do likewise.

I do not mean to suggest here that the Mormon tradition remains too lively for such use, but it is interesting to note that for obvious reasons Mormon novels are still received more favorably by non-Mormons or the less orthodox, than they are by the devout Latter-day Saints.

The problem which confronted Vardis Fisher and the other Mormon novelists, however, was not so much this, as it was that the naturalistic view of history demanded absolute accuracy to historical fact—the ultimate in realism. The novelists attempted to accept this view, while, at the same time, seeking to satisfy the demands of their own aesthetic perception. Without satisfying the latter, their novels would have been as dull and

empty as a photograph taken by a child who picks up a camera and opens the shutter without any regard for what objects are within the range of focus.

This is, of course, the danger of any completely naturalistic view of art, whether it be painting, poetry, or novel writing. It is responsible for the very monotonous conclusion to Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy*, in which the trial of Clyde Griffiths was taken almost literally from the newspaper accounts of a similar trial. It is responsible for what many feel is a lack of form in almost all contemporary novels.

And yet, strangely enough, the most important works of all time are those which have an historical background—the Greek tragedies, Shakespeare's plays, and perhaps the greatest of all novels, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Of these it might be said that the tragedies were possible because, for the Greeks, history had receded into the realm of myth. Historical detail, in the modern sense, was so unimportant to them that several versions of the same incident could be adapted by the poet without, apparently, antagonizing the audience. Of *War and Peace*, we know that the value of the novel results not from the historical events which it portrays (although its recent popular interest might), but rather from fictitious or imagined characters which it calls into action. Its theories of history and warfare are recognized by experts as sheer nonsense, but the knowledge which it shows of human acts and motives raises it to the level of great art.

Tolstoy was interested in history, in the habits and the customs of the Russians, French, Germans, and Austrians who participated in the Napoleonic invasion

of Russia, but he was most interested in the human beings who made up that intricate puzzle which was Russian society in 1812, and of which the customs and habits were the outward clothing. Characters were revealed not through a strict historical accuracy, not through the garments which they wore, the speech they used, but through their actions, heightened as they were by the writer's skill in molding the facts into an artistic form.

This is true also of the Mormon novelists. If they have not succeeded to the degree achieved by Tolstoy, a partial reason is that they accept a certain theory of historical fiction writing—publicized by such writers as Kenneth Roberts and held by most of us—to the effect that the value of a novel is inversely proportionate to the number of anachronisms appearing between its covers. What they—and we—must learn is that history is valuable as an artistic medium only when it has become flexible enough to yield under the sculptor's chisel or the potter's hand. When it has, it is usually not history at all, but mythology. It is a way of living which has been colored by the imagination and become myth. It is more than historical data, it is the fact become fiction, and it may be examined with the same objective realism of the Greeks, made beautiful through the same artistic processes. Through an interest in folklore, we uncover the objective symbols of a way of life that has been lived, and these symbols contain psychological information that is invaluable to the creative artist. The test for literature, however, is not in the mere uncovering of them, but in the use to which they are put.



Appendix

LITERATURE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

SINCE 1935; A BIBLIOGRAPHY *By Nellie Cliff*

INTRODUCTION

The Rocky Mountain region includes the states of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and the Northern part of New Mexico. It is a region dominated by the Rocky Mountains, all parts of which have a similar physical, historical and cultural background.

It is the most inland section of the United States, the most lightly populated and probably the most isolated. No white man had set eyes on Great Salt Lake until 1824 and it was more than twenty-five years later before there were any permanent centers of population between Kansas and San Francisco. Even today the combined population of the states in this region represent only one half the population of New York City. (4) The social origins of the section were mining camps, cattle ranches and Mormon settlements.

The history of serious writing in the Rocky Mountain area

may be said to have begun somewhere around the year 1935, the year that was selected as the beginning for this bibliography. By *serious* regional writing, we mean writings that have met the test proscribed by Wilson O. Clough in an article "Regionalism" published in the *Rocky Mountain Review* (Winter, 1938-39): "Authentic regional expressions is a matter of living and absorbing landscape and character into the unconscious. It is natural, even inevitable, and it can be neither forced nor faked."

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Brinig, Myron. *The Gambler Takes a Wife*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1943. 309 pp.

A tale of a Montana frontier town in the 1880's.

———. *The Sisters*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937. 570 pp.

As a boy in Silver Bow, Montana, Mr. Brinig knew and admired three daughters of the local druggist. *The Sisters* is the story of their lives. Louise, the eldest, falls in love with a young newspaperman, and runs off with him to San Francisco. Grace, the colorless sister, marries the local banker. Helen, the youngest and the beauty of the family, marries a fat millionaire and goes from one love affair to another.

———. *The Sun Sets in the West*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935. 360 pp.

The scene of this novel by the author of *Singermann* (1929) and *Wide Open Town* (1931) is once more a mining town in Montana. The book is really a collection of short stories about the people of Copper City, most of whom we meet first as employees or customers in the store owned by Leon and Fanya Fandor. Through the many and diverse characters, Mr. Brinig gives a cross-section of life in a mining town during the depression.

———. *Hour of Nightfall*. New York: Rinehart, 1947.

The story of a woman whose beauty was not enough to make her a wife, a mother, or even a genuine woman.

———. *You and I*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1945. 474 pp.

Claire and Eric Whitney, foster brother and sister, were separated in childhood when both parents died suddenly. Claire went to live with her grandmother in New York and Eric to live with an uncle in Montana. After years of separation and different ways of living, they are again reunited in their old New Mexico home.

Clark, Walter Van Tilburg. *The City of Trembling Leaves*. New York: Random House, 1945. 690 pp.

A story set in Reno, Nevada, which is the "City of Trembling Leaves". It deals with the adolescence and early maturity of Tim Hazard, a sensitive boy whose ambition is to be a composer. Tim is a dreamer who is influenced by his surroundings; leaves, mountains and lakes. Throughout the book he is working on a composition to express his feelings about the place where he was born and raised. He does not succeed in writing his symphony of "The City of Trembling Leaves" until he makes peace with himself and reality.

Mr. Clark grew up and went through college in Reno, where his father was President of the University. He writes of the Reno he knew as a boy and not of Reno as the divorce center of the nation.

———. *The Ox-Bow Incident*. New York: Random House, 1940. 287 pp.

The scene of this first novel is the cattle country of Nevada in the 1880's. A realistic story of a lynching of three supposed cattle thieves and the events preceding and following the lynching. The action all takes place in one day. The narrator is a cowboy, Art Croft, who is a participator in the events. All the heterogeneous characters found in the West are brought into the tale. Mr. Clark based his story upon the struggles of a pioneer society for an elementary kind of social justice.

Corle, Edwin. *Burro Alley*. New York: Random House, 1938. 279 pp.

Relates the actions of an assorted collection of characters in a humorous, caricatured situation. The incidents take place in two cafes in Albuquerque one night during the tourist season.

———. *Coarse Gold*. New York: Dutton, 1942. 251 pp.

A well told tale about a Nevada ghost town. Coarse Gold was the scene of a gold rush in 1842; by 1900 the rush was over and the desert took over the town. Chris Wick, philosopher and former prospector, stayed on in the town as its sole inhabitant. In 1942 the town was on the verge of again becoming a busy town, due to the war and the need of a product called tungsten.

———. *Desert Country* (American Folkways Series) New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1941. 357 pp.

History, description, legend, Indian lore and anecdotal history of the Southwest deserts. In general it concerns the area between the Pacific Coast Range and the Rocky Mountain chain, which includes such deserts as the Mojave, the Colorado, the Amargosa, and the Arizona's western slope.

———. *Fig Tree John*. New York: Liveright, 1935. 318 pp.

In 1906, Fig Tree John and his young wife left their tribe of Apache Indians and settled in an isolated spot near the Salton Sea. John's wife is killed by white fugitives and John, nursing hatred and suspicion, becomes more and more a mysterious figure. His son grows up and adjusts to the white man's ways but John can not accept them. It is a good picture of the adjustment of the Indian to the present world.

———. *People of the Earth*. New York: Random House, 1937. 401 pp.

A modern realistic novel of Navajo life. It follows a Navajo boy through three years of a white man's education; years of attempting to adjust himself to white man's civilization; to the final return to an Indian way of life.

———. *Listen, Bright Angel*. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946.

A combination of guidebook, history, and geology of the Grand Canyon. It includes fact and legend, including a partial translation of Father Escalante's diary.

———. *Three Ways to Mecca*. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1947. 337 pp.

Culmsee, Carlton, editor. *Utah Sings*, Volume II. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1942. 300 pp.

The purpose of this volume is the development of Utah poetry. It includes contributions from approximately 150 Utah writers.

Davidson, Levette J. (and Blake Forrester) *Rocky Mountain Tales*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947. 302 pp.

A collection of lore from the Rocky Mountain area, compiled by the director of the Rocky Mountain Folklore Conference at the University of Denver.

Davis, Clyde Brion. *The Great American Novel*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1938. 309 pp.

The diary of Homer Zigler, a newspaperman, tells of his life and times over a period of thirty years. He started his career in Buffalo and wandered westward, working in Cleveland, Kansas City, San Francisco, and finally in Denver. All his life he hoped to write *The Great American Novel* but the time never seemed just right. His diary records both his daily experiences and his dream story of the life of his first sweetheart, Frances.

———. *The Stars Incline*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1946. 280 pp.

The story of the career of Barney Morgan, newspaperman, and his long infatuation for a beautiful but selfish woman. He began his career in Denver, and went on to New York, and then saw war, first in Spain and then in the African and European campaigns. It was after he returned an invalid and again saw his wife, who had divorced him while he was abroad, that he realized how worthless she was.

DeVoto, Bernard Augustine. *The Year of Decision: 1846*. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1943. 538 pp.

A narrative of a decisive year in the history of the United States—a year which saw the outbreak of the war with Mexico, a great Oregon and California emigration, the conquest of New Mexico, the migration of the Mormons, the conquest of California, Zachary Taylor's campaign in Mexico, Doniphan's expedition, and the tragedy of the Donner party. These narratives are told in terms of the personal experiences of the various historically famed or typical figures who made it significant. The characters, great and small, are skillfully woven into an intricate pattern and have been brought to life.

———. *Mountain Time*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1947. 357 pp.

A psychological romance which tells the story of a New York surgeon and the wife of a successful author who find a cure for their neuroses by returning to the small Western city where they were born.

Fante, John. *Dago Red*. New York: Viking, 1940. 211 pp.

Thirteen short sketches of Catholic Italians in a small Colorado town near Denver. The stories are about the Toscanas family as seen through the eyes of one of the small boys of the family. It shows the place of religion in their lives.

John Fante has used his own background in writing *Dago Red*. Fante spent his early life in Boulder, Colorado, and is the son of an Italian emigrant.

———. *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Sons, 1938. 266 pp.

A sad story of an Italian mason, Svevo Bandini, and his family—a beautiful wife and three young boys—and of Bandini's affair with a yellow haired widow. The setting is a small Colorado town.

Ferril, Thomas Hornsby. *Trial by Time*. New York: Harper, 1944. 105 pp.

A collection of poems by an American poet, born in Denver, Colorado, who owns and edits *The Rocky Mountain Herald*. His poetry shows a consciousness of the West. He is concerned with the theme of man and nature. Earlier books by Mr. Ferril are: *High Passage* (1924) and *Westering* (1934).

———. *I Hate Thursday*. New York: Harper, 1946. 233 pp.

A collection of personal essays first published in the *Rocky Mountain Herald* and Harper's Magazine.

Fisher, Vardis. *April; a Fable of Love*. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1937. 206 pp.

The story of June Weeg, an unattractive girl who was unfortunately endowed with a romantic nature. In her day dreams, June is slender, beautiful, and has a handsome, romantic lover like Willie Argyel, who works for June's father. In reality Sol Incham, a homely fellow, is the only one attracted to her. In the end June decides to leave the monotony and boredom of her home and go to unknown parts, but on her way she stops to bid Sol "goodbye" and stays to marry him.

———. *Children of God; an American Epic*. New York: Harper, 1939. 769 pp.

Children of God is a narrative of the Mormon movement. It describes the strange beginnings of the church in New York and follows the Mormons through Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and finally to Salt Lake City. The first section is about Joseph Smith and presents him as an earnest and sincere young man, with an amazing personality. The second part is concerned with the leadership of Brigham Young and the westward movement of 30,000 saints. Fisher's depiction of Young's character shows a tremendous admiration of the man and is the best part of the book. The third section deals with a fictitious family and shows the development from the time of Brigham Young's death to the end of plural marriages in Utah.

The author of the book is a native of Idaho and at the present lives at Hagerman, Idaho. *Children of God* is probably his best known work and was awarded the Harper Prize in 1939.

———. *City of Illusion*. New York: Harper, 1941. 382 pp.

A novel based upon the discovery of the Comstock Lode in Nevada in 1859, the rise of Virginia City during the boom which followed, and the final failure of the mines which then left Virginia City a ghost town. The central characters are Eilley and her likeable but dull-witted husband, Sandy Bowers. Eilley ran a boarding house in the canyon and became enormously

rich when gold was discovered. Conflict develops from Eilley's efforts to inject "culture" and "respectability" into the boom town, and from her desire to make a financier out of Sandy.

———. *Forgive Us Our Virtues*. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1938. 347 pp.

A long novel full of characters, all of whom are obsessed by sex. The scene of the story is a western university town, the author's principal mouthpiece is the professor of psychology in the university.

———. *The Mothers: an American Saga of Courage*. New York: Vanguard, 1943. 334 pp.

Re-telling of the tragic journey of the Donner Party on the way to California in 1846. It is told in fictional form but it adheres to the known facts almost as closely as the historical account which George Stewart wrote a few years ago. It is an appalling tale of disaster, starvation and death from the point of view of the mothers of the party.

———. *No Villain Need Be*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1936. 387 pp.

The concluding volume of the almost strictly autobiographical tetralogy. It tells of Vridar's life as an instructor and professor in a university in New York. Vridar retires from teaching at the age of thirty and returns to his native Idaho to write a story about himself.

———. *We Are Betrayed*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1935. 369 pp.

This is the third novel of a tetralogy, but it may be read as a complete novel in itself. The first in the series, *In Tragic Life*, (1922) is a novel of boyhood, childhood and youth on an Idaho ranch. In the second book, *Passion Spins the Plot*, (1934) Vridar is in college in Salt Lake City still trying to find himself. Now in *We Are Betrayed*, is the story of Vridar's marriage to Nelo, a part Indian girl. He goes on with his career in the face of tremendous odds; working his way through the provincial college, doing graduate work in Chicago, working as a bootlegger, as a janitor and as a taxi driver. The entire book is concerned with his futile quest for self understanding and adjustment.

———. *Darkness and the Deep*. New York: Vanguard, 1943. 296 pp.

The first volume of a long fictional work to be known as *A Testament of Man* in which the naturalistic concept of man's origin is depicted. In this volume, man's animal-like progenitor first learns the rudiments of defense and conquest by the use of a club as an extension of his physical power.

———. *The Golden Rooms*. New York: Vanguard, 1945. 325 pp.

A continuation of the above. Man learns the art of fire-making and develops his fear of the supernatural.

———. *Intimations of Eve*. New York: Vanguard, 1946. 331 pp.

A further continuation, in which mankind is depicted during a period of matriarchy and moon worship.

———. *Adam and the Serpent*. New York: Vanguard, 1947. 335 pp.

Woman's dominance is contested by man. The beginning of sun worship is depicted.

Foote, Ellis. *Ballad of Garn Dull*. Ogden, Utah: Rocky Mountain Press, 1943. 28 pp.

Twenty poems of a young Utah poet who now resides in Salt Lake City.

———. *Layman's Fall*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1947. 26 pp.

Part I of a long narrative poem which the publisher calls the inheritor of the long years of experiment in American verse. The narrative is set in Salt Lake City, with a background of Mormon mythology.

Gardiner, Dorothy. *Golden Lady*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1936. 498 pp.

Vannie Swenk, daughter of a gambler in Duke's Gulch, a gold mining town in Colorado, grew up to be a beauty and married a wealthy man. After his death she left Colorado to travel but eventually returned hoping to "strike it rich" in the Golden Lady mine. The story captures the sparkle and color of Colorado.

———. *Snow Water*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939. 360 pp.

A story showing the development and importance of irrigation in the growth of the West. The scene is a small Colorado town midway between Denver and Cheyenne. It tells how Captain Daniel Bartor founded the town in 1868, how he put through his irrigation project bringing snow water from the white mountain peaks into the township, and it comes down to 1934 with Celie and Daniel celebrating their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary.

———. *West of the River*. New York: Crowell, 1941. 347 pp.

Picturesque description of the early life, travel and development of the country west of the Missouri River. Begins with the first ventures of white men into the territory with its vast plains and prairies and goes up to the building of the transcontinental railway. It is an indispensable addition to the record of the development of the West.

Ghiselin, Brewster. *Against the Circle*. New York: Dutton, 1946.

This is the first published volume of poetry by the poetry editor of *Rocky Mountain Review*. Mr. Ghiselin has had prose and verse published in such periodicals as *Poetry*, *Accent*, *University Review*, *Story*, etc.

Gurthrie, A. B., Jr. *The Big Sky*. New York: William Sloan, 1947. 386 pp.

The best novel to date dealing with the period of the fur trappers and the mountain men in the Rocky Mountain area. The author is a native of Montana, a newspaperman in Louisville, Ky., who held a Neiman fellowship at Harvard University.

Howard, Joseph K. *Montana, High Wide and Handsome*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1943. 347 pp.

The editor of *The Great Falls Leader* writes of his native state and its economic history. He tells how Montana's natural resources have been wantonly squandered. It is the best single volume on the history of Montana to have been written to date.

———. *Montana Margins*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946.

An anthology of writings by Montana authors about Montana.

James, Will. *The American Cowboy*. New York: Scribner, 1942. 273 pp.

The history of the American cowboy in fiction form, illustrated with drawings in black and white. Mr. James knows his cowboys, his cows, his horses, and his riding country.

Lauritzen, Jonreed. *Arrows into the Sun*. New York: Knopf, 1943. 311 pp.

The Navajo country near the Grand Canyon in the 1860's is the scene of this story of Sigor, the son of a white father and a part Navajo mother. After Sigor's mother was killed by a band of slave hunters, the boy went with his white father to a small Mormon settlement. Sigor found that he did not fit into the white settlement nor could he go back and be content with the Indians. *Arrows into the Sun* tells of Sigor's divided allegiance and of his struggle to make an acceptable way of life from two widely separated modes of living.

Mr. Lauritzen has an intimate knowledge of the country and people he writes about in this first novel. He was born in Richfield, Utah, and grew up in the Arizona Strip, or as he calls it "the Navajo country."

Lillard, Richard G. *Desert Challenge; an Interpretation of Nevada*. New York: Knopf, 1942. 388 pp.

A composite picture of Nevada, its political, economic and social history from its beginnings to the present day. Factual and compact but readable.

Macleod, Norman. *The Bitter Roots*. New York: Smith & Durrell, 1941. 286 pp.

This second novel of a young poet is made up of episodes from a Montana boyhood during the World War. Most of the narratives center about the figure of Paul Craig between his twelfth and sixteenth year. Gives a good cross section of boyhood twenty-five years ago.

———. *Thanksgiving Before November*. Station City, New York: Parnassus, 1936. 90 pp.

A short volume of poems recalling early days spent in the West.

———. *We Thank You All the Time*. Prairie City, Ill.: Decker Press, 1941. 72 pp.

A book of poetry with a wide range of interest. The best poetry is about the Indians. He also writes about travel, places, ancestors and politics.

McQuarrie, Lillian M. *Half-angel*. New York: Doubleday, 1946. 219 pp.

Charles Frazier met Lotus Scott in a San Francisco hotel room on a foggy lonesome night. Frazier was instantly attracted by the lady's tragic charm. When Lotus was killed in a plane crash near Salt Lake City, Frazier set out to discover why, as she had thought, she had brought evil to all those dearest to her.

Miller, Max. *Reno*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1941. 267 pp.

The author of *I Cover the Waterfront* (1932) describes the history and customs of the "biggest little city in the world." It is a reporter's portrait of Reno with numerous character sketches of strange personalities. *The Beginning of A Mortal* is an earlier account of life on a Montana homestead.

Morgan, Dale L. *The Humboldt, Highroad of the West* (Rivers of America). New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1943. 374 pp.

The Humboldt is indeed the "Highroad of the West." Along its course, through the semi-baked western desert, came the Spaniards, the trappers, the explorers, the soldiers, the miners, the Mormons, the settlers and the outlaws. All played an important role in the settlement of the West, but all were completely dependent upon the Humboldt. It was almost the most necessary river of America and the most hated.

The Humboldt country is the setting for the struggle of man against nature. It is the scene of the Donner Party tragedy; of the rush for gold in '49; of the rise of Virginia City as the Comstock poured out its wealth; of the Indians' struggle for existence; of the Pony Express; of the linking of East and West by the railroads; and of the outlaws and rustlers.

Anyone who likes Western history will enjoy Mr. Morgan's story of the Humboldt.

———. *Great Salt Lake*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1947. 432 pp.

A book in the Bobbs-Merrill "Lakes Series." An historical and sociological study of the Great Salt Lake country and its relationship to the body of water from which it gets its name.

Murphy, Clyde Francis. *Glittering Hill*. New York: Dutton, 1944. 478 pp.

A story of the financial and political war between two copper magnates of Butte, Montana, back in the 1890's. The setting, the pictures and the men of the times are all realistic. This first novel is the winner of Dutton's first Lewis and Clark Northwest Contest.

Nelson, Ira Stephens. *On Sarpy Creek*. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1938. 299 pp.

Quietly told story of farmers and ranchers in the hills of Montana. Good characterization of a family group.

Neiman, Gilbert. *There's a Tyrant in Every Country*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947. 347 pp.

A first novel by a native of Denver, who has contributed to the *Rocky Mountain Review*, *Accent*, and Robert Lowry's "Little Man" publications. It is the story of Freddie Connor, an American boy who hated the Mexicans so much he went to Mexico to find out why. He discovered that the evil was the result not of the Mexicans, but of their oppressors.

Olson, Ted. *Hawk's Way*. New York: League to Support Poetry, 1942. 53 pp.

Ted Olson is a native of Wyoming. In this book of lyrics Olson's pictures of natural objects invariably carry the pessimistic tones of one who knows that the exhilaration man derives from nature is a short-lived thing. This is his second book of poetry, the first being *Stranger and Afraid*, published in 1928.

Pearson, Lorene. *The Harvest Waits*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1941. 441 pp.

A story of seven Mormon pioneer families, who settled in the dry sagebrush country of Southern Utah, and who attempted to live the "United Order". The social experiment fails and with its failure we see the weakness of those whose faith was not strong enough to withstand the loss of material wealth.

Mrs. Pearson's first novel is a good picture of an early Mormon community.

Scowcroft, Richard Pingree. *Children of the Covenant*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1945. 292 pp.

A novel about contemporary life of Mormons in Utah. A good portrait of a returning missionary and his effort to readjust himself to modern living, and yet retain his ideals. Mr. Scowcroft depicts his native Ogden graphically. The people in his novel are not a "typical" Mormon family, but they have something in common with many Mormon families.

Snell, George. *And if Man Triumph*. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1938. 215 pp.

Mr. Snell tells his story through the eyes of young Lewis Manley, who travels from Salt Lake in a company with Ace and Salley Bennet and their three children. The party decides to try a short cut to California and the gold fields, even though their Mormon guide advises them not to. The day-by-day account of their journey is vivid and intense. Mr. Snell catches the optimism and unrest of the party as they begin, and the gradual hopelessness as the cut-off leads them into the scorching desert. The story of how Manley and his friend, John Rogers, traverse the desert by foot and bring aid to the party is absorbing and dramatic.

———. *Root, Hog and Die*. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1936. 418 pp.

A story about Mormonism which begins in 1835 and follows one man's life through from the day he becomes a Mormon until his death in 1900.

Jim Brent, the chief character, was a farm boy in upstate New York when he joined the Mormon church. Motivated by a promised paradise where none would be rich and none poor, he survived the years of persecution and the journey to the shores of Salt Lake. In Salt Lake he prospers in possessions, in wives

and in church standing, finally rising to ownership of an enterprise in which his fellow "saints" toil for wages. As the story grows the story's center shifts from Jim to his son and then to his grandson. The novel traces the changing policies of the church through the effects on this one man and his family.

Many of the incidents in the book are taken from stories of the Mormon pioneers as they were told to Mr. Snell in his childhood.

Sorensen, M. B. Virginia (Eggertsen). *A Little Lower Than the Angels*. New York: Knopf, 1942. 427 pp.

The Mormon settlement in Nauvoo, Illinois, is the scene of this first novel. It deals with the period of Mormon history just before and after the death of Joseph Smith and the beginning of the trek of his followers to Utah, led by Brigham Young. The central figures are Simon Baker and his wife Mercy. It is told from a feminine point of view.

———. *On this Star*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946.

A novel of Mormon life set in the temple-city of Manti in central Utah. It deals primarily with contemporary characters and depicts the conflict between Mormon orthodoxy and the liberal position, exemplified in the relationship between Chel Bowen and two half-brothers, Jens and Erik Eriksen.

———. *The Neighbors*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947.

The story of a likeable, city-bred family who settle down on a sheep ranch in a Colorado valley. The main theme is the love stories of the two older children, woven into a conflict with a neighboring family.

Stegner, Wallace. *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*. New York: Duell Sloan and Pearce, 1943. 515 pp.

The scene of Mr. Stegner's first long novel is the entire Rocky Mountain region from Saskatchewan, Canada, to Salt Lake City and Reno. The story centers around Bo Mason, his wife, Elsa, and their two sons. For the Masons, life is an almost continuous moving day because the next town, country, or state, might be the place where Bo will "strike it rich". In his search for easy

money and power, Bo tries gambling, farming, liquor running, and mining. He never achieves the success he felt he was capable of, but died a defeated, bewildered and bankrupt speculator.

———. *Mormon Country*. (American Folkways Series.) Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1942. 362 pp.

An excellently written and interesting introduction to the country lying principally in Utah and settled by the Mormons. The first chapter is set in a contemporary rural village in Utah and attempts to show how early customs have been retained in small communities. With the exception of the first chapter, the story of the Mormons and their settlements is told chronologically. The first part of the book deals chiefly with the Mormons and the second part shows the increasing number of non-Mormons. Mr. Stegner has combined a great amount of information and lively comment with description and has made a book which is excellent reading and also is solidly based.

Swallow, Alan. *XI Poems*. Muscatine, Iowa: Prairie Press, 1943. 20 pp.

A short volume of poetry by a native of Wyoming. Mr. Swallow is the poetry editor of *New Mexico Quarterly Review* and also the editor of the annual *American Writing* (1942, 1943, 1944).

———. *The Remembered Land*. Prairie City, Ill.: Decker, 1946. 51 pp.

The first full volume of poems by Mr. Swallow, containing 26 poems, including those first published in *XI Poems*.

Sykes, Hope Williams (Mrs. Howard W. Sykes). *Joppa Door*. New York: Putnam, 1937. 224 pp.

A German peasant tells the simple story of her life. In girlhood her family moved from Germany to Palestine. There a Mormon missionary converted her husband and the two migrated to America. At sixty, she realized that at last her ambitions were being fulfilled in the lives of her children.

———. *Second Hoeing*. New York: Putnam, 1935. 309 pp.

An excellent novel of life in the Colorado beet country. The story centers around Hannah Schreissmiller, the middle daughter of a German-Russian family. Hannah dreams of an education and a chance for an American way of life, but after her mother-

dies and leaves her the responsibility of taking care of two younger children her hopes are again and again frustrated. Mrs. Sykes has lived in the heart of the Colorado beet country and knows her people and their problems. She makes her characters come to life in this first novel.

Walker, Mildred (Mrs. F. R. Schemm). *Unless the Wind Turns*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1941. 235 pp.

A brief story about a small group of easterners who went for a camping trip in the Montana mountains and were caught by a forest fire. The tragic happenings revealed the true character of each member of the party. The action all takes place in a three-day period.

———. *Winter Wheat*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1944. 306 pp.

Winter Wheat is a story of human conflicts and of man's struggle against the odds of nature. The narrator is Ellen Webb, young college girl from a remote Montana wheat ranch. She describes life on the ranch she loves; her New England bred father and her Russian peasant mother; her college days; her love for Gilbert; teaching in a distant and lonely one room school; and her adjustment to life after finding she has lost Gilbert.

In this regional book, Mildred Walker really makes you know and feel a love of the land.

Waters, Frank. *Below Grass Roots*. New York: Liveright, 1937. 523 pp.

A sequel to *Wild Earth's Nobility*. This story completes the history of Joseph Rogier and his search for gold in the country around Pike's Peak. The story can be read without benefit of its predecessor.

———. *The Colorado* (Rivers of America). New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1946. 400 pp.

One of the longest books in the "Rivers of America" series, it covers the geology, history, geography, and economics of the Colorado River area.

———. *The Yogi of Cockroach Court*. New York: Rinehart, 1947. 275 pp.

A philosophical romance set in a small town on the Mexican border.

———. *The Dust Within the Rock*. New York: Liveright, 1940. 534 pp.

Concluding novel of a trilogy. The central figure is March Cable, grandson of old Rogier. Gives a vigorous close-up of the hero's life as a newsboy, a student and finally as a mining engineer.

———. *Man Who Killed the Deer*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942. 311 pp.

A story about the personal troubles of a young Pueblo Indian. When Mariniano returned from a white man's school, he was out of favor with the elders of his tribe and in conflict with the law because he had killed a deer on the government reservation. He was unhappy in his home and unsatisfied with his religion. He finally solved his problems by following the Indians' instinctive approach to life and surrendering himself to the unseen forces of nature. Shows the conflict between the Indian and white civilization.

———. *Midas of the Rockies: the Story of Stratton and Cripple Creek*. New York: Covici, 1937. 344 pp.

A biography of Winfield Scott Stratton, the discoverer of Colorado's Cripple Creek gold mine and the richest mining man the Colorado Rockies ever produced. A tale of luck and hard work with astounding results. The book also gives the details of the entire history of Colorado mining.

———. *People of the Valley*. New York: Farrar, Rinehart, 1941. 309 pp.

A story of a valley high in the mountains of New Mexico and its people—part French, part Spanish, part Irish, part Indian. The chief character is an aged herb woman, experienced and wise, to whom the people turn when they are in trouble. All Mr. Waters' knowledge of the various cultures of New Mexico and of the beauty of the country is brought to focus in this story.

———. *Wild Earth's Nobility*. New York: Liveright, 1935. 454 pp.

This is a novel of the West during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The scene is chiefly in Colorado. The story centers around the family of Joseph Rogier, son of a Southern gentleman, who lost all he had before the war. After serving

as an apprentice to a carpenter, Joseph made his way West, married, had a large family and by steady honest work made a small fortune. Although Rogier resisted the gold fever for years, it finally took him and he lost everything he had worked for.

West, Ray B. Jr., editor. *Rocky Mountain Reader*. New York: Dutton, 1946.

A collection of short stories, poems, and excerpts from books by writers from the Rocky Mountains. Some of the authors included are: Vardis Fisher, Wallace Stegner, Bernard DeVoto, Brewster Ghiselin, Maurine Whipple, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Jonreed Lauritzen, Thomas Hornsby Ferril, Ted Olson, Dale L. Morgan, Alan Swallow, Whit Burnett, Mildred Walker, Clyde Brion Davis, and others.

The editor of the anthology is the founder of the *Rocky Mountain Review*. At the present time Mr. West is teaching English at University of Kansas, Lawrence, and editing *The Western Review*.

-----, *Rocky Mountain Stories* (Sage Books), Gunnison, Colorado: Swallow and Critchlow, 1942. 92 pp.

The first collection of short stories by more than a single author to come from the Rocky Mountain region. It includes seven stories by the following authors: Paul Horgan, Vardis Fisher, Wallace Stegner, Ted Olson, Grace Stone Coates, George Snell and Weldon Kees.

Whipple, Maurine. *The Giant Joshua*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1940. 637 pp.

Maurine Whipple's first novel, *Giant Joshua*, was motivated by an admiration for the early settlers of her home town. The book shows a great nearness of the author to the people of whom she writes.

The story of the settlement of the Dixie mission is told from the viewpoint of a young convert to the Mormon Church, who became the third wife of an older church leader. It covers twenty-six years of a people's struggle against economic hardships, social disapproval and political persecution. Through descriptive passages, descriptions of characters, customs and costumes, Miss Whipple gives an excellent and complete report of a small pioneer household and community.

———. *This is the Place: Utah*. New York: Knopf, 1945. 222 pp.

A guide book of Utah bringing in many out-of-the-way places not frequently visited by the average tourist. Miss Whipple brings in history, social analysis, and personal narratives along with the description. It is concerned mostly with Southern Utah: the place Miss Whipple knows best. The text is accompanied by 100 photographs in color and in black and white.

Woodman, Mrs. Jean. *Glory Spent*. New York: Carrick, 1940. 347 pp.

Glory Spent attempts to depict Mormon society as it is today. It is Mrs. Woodman's first novel and is partially biographical. It is set in Provo, Utah, where Mrs. Woodman herself grew up.

Old Hans Sorenson is the devout first generation Mormon convert from Denmark. Even at an advanced age he is staunch in his faith. His daughter, Grethe, is never satisfied with the religion and takes it as a matter of course. Grethe's daughter, Marian, never catches any of the gleam which led her grandfather over land and sea. In the end Grethe aids her daughter in trying to escape from the emotional bleakness of the small town.

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